

The Epistle to the Romans
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Course Pack

DOCTRINAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

“Scripture is inspired, inerrant & authoritative”

If the Epistle to the Romans is inspired by God (*God-breathed*), two necessary implications are that it is without error and as authoritative as though God were speaking it audibly from atop Mount Sinai.

“The authority of Scripture over the Church”

The epistle to the Romans owes its placement in the New Testament Canon not to the authority of the Church, but to the authority of God. The role of the early Church was simply to recognize the stamp of apostolic authority on this epistle. Thus, the early Church did not exercise authority over Scripture, but rather, bent the knee to God’s authority in the written form of this Epistle. Sound doctrine understands that the Church is not “over” the Scriptures; it is under them. The Church, like every minister of God, is *Verbi Divini Minister* (servant of the Word of God).

HEART POSTURE PRESUPPOSITIONS

We should approach this epistle, as the rest of Scripture, with the sincere prayer for wisdom and truth. Ponder Jesus’ words to Pilate that “*everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice*”. Jesus was saying that **intent precedes content**. The inclination of the heart & mind determines not only what is heard but how it is interpreted. Thus, we will approach the sacred Scriptures either with an attitude of pride, having already arrived at full understanding, or with an attitude of humility which says, “*Speak, LORD, Thy servant is listening*”.

Let us embrace the full meaning of *Verbi Divini Minister*. God commanded a quiet humbly teachable heart posture through the prophet Isaiah when He said, “*but this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.*” (Isaiah 66:2; ESV) May He find this heart inclination in each seeker of Truth.

Outline of the Epistle to the Romans

Prologue (1:1-15)

- I. Theme: The Righteousness of God (1:16-17)**

- II. The wrath of God revealed (1:18 - 3:20)**
 - A. On the Pagan (1:18-32)
 - B. On the Moralist (2:1-16)
 - C. On the Jew (2:17-3:8)
 - D. On all Mankind (3:9-20)

- III. The gift of God's righteousness revealed (3:21 - 5:21)**
 - A. *At the Cross steadfast love and faithfulness met; righteousness and peace kissed each other*" (Psalm 85 & Rom 3:21-31)
 - B. Two Old Testament precedents (4:1-8)
 - C. Abraham Justified by Faith (4:9-25)
 - D. Christ's righteousness triumphs over Wrath (5:1-11)
 - E. Christ's righteousness triumphs over the first Adam's Sin (5:12-21)

- IV. The way of holiness (6:1 - 8:39)**
 - A. Christ's righteousness triumphs over Sin (6:1-23)
 - B. Christ's righteousness triumphs over Law (7:1-25)
 - C. Christ's righteousness triumphs over Death (8:1-39)

- V. Divine sovereignty & human responsibility (9:1 - 11:36)**
 - A. Israel's Unbelief (9:1-5)
 - B. God's Sovereign Choices (9:6-29)
 - C. Human Responsibility (9:30-10:21)
 - D. God's Sovereign Purposes (11:1-32)
 - E. Doxology to God's Sovereignty (11:33-36)

- VI. The Christian life (12:1 - 15:13)**
 - A. Manifold Practical Duties (12:1-21)
 - B. The Christian and the State (13:1-7)
 - C. The Primacy of Love (13:8-10)

- VII. The approaching Consummation (13:11 - 14)**

- VIII. Christian liberty & charity (14:1 - 15:6)**
 - A. Christian Liberty (14:1-12)
 - B. Christian Charity (14:13-23)
 - C. Christ's Example (15:1-6)

- IX. Christ the hope of Jew & Gentile (15:7 - 13)**

Epilogue & Doxology (15:14 – 16:27)

Analysis of the first eight chapters

The epistle to the Romans consists of three parts. **The first**, chapters 1 - 8, is occupied in the discussion of the doctrine of justification and its consequences. **The second**, chapters 9 – 11, deals with the Sovereignty of God and human responsibility as seen in the Jewish people. **The third**, chapters 12 – 16, consists of practical exhortations and final greetings to the Christians at Rome.

The first part of the apostle begins by Paul's greeting the Roman Christians, commending them for their faith, and expressing his desire to see them, and his readiness to preach the gospel at Rome.

This readiness was founded on the conviction that the gospel revealed the only method by which men can be saved, that is, by faith in Jesus Christ. He asserts that this method applies to all mankind, Gentile as well as Jew, chapter 1:1-17.

Then in order to establish the doctrine of justification, Paul first proves that the Gentiles cannot be justified by their own works (1:18-39). He then establishes the same position with reference to the Moralists (2:1-16) and finally to the Jew (2:17-3:8).

Thus, having shown that the path of justification by works is unattainable for sinners, he reveals that method God has provided called the gospel (3:21-31). The veracity or truth and excellence of this method he then confirms in chapters 4 & 5.

Paul then deals with the anticipated objection to the doctrine of gratuitous acceptance, namely, that it must lead to the indulgence of sin. It is here that he reveals the true design and operation of the law in chapters 6 & 7. Then finally the confidence of all who are in Christ is beautifully unfolded in chapter 8.

As Paul develops his argument against the Gentiles, he assumes the foundational principle of retribution that God will punish sin, and then proves that they are justly charged both with impiety and immorality.

For though they possessed a competent knowledge of God, they did not worship him but turned to idols giving themselves up to all manner of iniquity (1:18-32).

Paul then commences his argument with the Jews by expanding the principle of divine justice. He insists on God's impartiality by showing that he will judge all men, both Jew and non-Jew, on the basis of their works and according to what light they had available (2:1-16). The conclusion is that the Jew, when tried by these rules, is as justly and certainly exposed to condemnation as the Gentiles (2:17-29).

The peculiar privileges of the Jews give no ground of hope that they will escape being judged on the same principles as other men, and when thus judged, will be found guilty before God. Indeed, the greater the light the more severe the judgment.

Paul's conclusion is that all men are therefore, under condemnation. Mankind thus cannot be justified by good works (3:1-20).

It is here, at this point that the glorious good news of the Gospel breaks forth revealing the only method by which God will justify men.

It is a method entirely gratuitous. The only condition given is faith, founded upon the redemption secured by Christ which reconciled two eternal attributes within God; His wrath and His mercy.

This mystery of God now revealed rightly humbles men and lays foundation for the global reign of Christ through His Church by the most unimaginable establishment and fulfillment of the Law!

God Himself satisfies the demands of His wrath on sin by pouring it out in full of God the Son, as the Father smites the Son. Stunning! My LORD, what love is this that pays so dearly?

Ponder these words by John Flavel (1628-1691) who wrote on the Covenant of Redemption.

“How reasonable it is that believers should embrace the hardest terms of obedience unto Christ, who complied with such hard terms for their salvation: they were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received you from the Father's hand: it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death, or not to enjoy a soul of you. Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving his bargain with Christ for you:

Father: *My Son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them. What shall be done for these souls?*

And thus Christ returns...

Son: *O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than they should suffer it: upon my, my Father, upon me be all their debt.*

Father: *But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite. Expect no abatements. If I spare them, I will not spare thee.*

Son: *Content, Father, let it be so. Charge it all upon me. I am able to discharge it, and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, (for so indeed it did, 2 Cor 8:9), “though He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor”, yet I am content to undertake it.*

Blush, ungrateful believers. O let shame cover your faces. Judge in yourselves now: has Christ deserved that you should stand him for trifles, that you should shrink at a few petty difficulties, and complain, this is hard, and that is harsh? O if you knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in this His wonderful condescension for you, you could not do it.”

The truth of this glorious doctrine is then set forth by Paul through the example of Abraham, the testimony of David, the nature of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, and from the nature of the law. Paul proposes the conduct of Abraham as an example and encouragement to Christians (chapter 4:1-25).

The grand doctrine of justification by faith in Christ is then set forth as that which secures peace with God, present joy, and the assurance of protection from the wrath to come (chapter 5:1-11).

The method, therefore, by which God proposes to save sinners, is analogous to that by which they were first brought under condemnation. As on account of the offense of one, the sentence of condemnation has passed to all men; so on account of the righteousness of one, all are declared righteous (chapter 5:12-21).

The doctrine of the gratuitous justification of sinners must not, indeed, cannot lead to an indulgence of sin, because such is the nature of union with Christ, and such the object for which he died, that all who receive the benefits of his death, experience the sanctifying influence of his life (chapter 6:1-11).

Indeed, as scripture says elsewhere,

“No one who is born of God practices sin, because his seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (1 John 3:9; NASV)

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.” (ESV)

Deliverance from the bondage of the law and from a legalistic spirit is essential to holiness. When the Christian is delivered from this bondage, he becomes a slave of God (ch 6:12-23).

As, therefore, a woman, in order to be married to a second husband, must first be freed from her former one, so the Christian, in order to be united to Christ, and to bring forth fruit unto God, must first be freed from the law (ch 7:1-6).

This necessity of deliverance from the law, does not arise from the fact that the law is evil, but from the nature of the case. The law is but the authoritative declaration of duty. It could not, it cannot alter the state of the sinner’s heart.

The real operation of the Law was & is to produce the conviction of sin (vs. 7-13), but it cannot effectually secure the destruction of sin. This can only be done by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, chap. 7: 7-25.

Those who are in Christ, therefore, are freed from the law; they have the indwelling of the life-giving Spirit; they are the children of God; they are chosen, called, and justified according to the divine purpose; and they are the objects of the unchanging love of God, chap. 8:1-39.

Exegesis of Romans 1

*“Paul, a **doulos** of Christ Jesus...” (1:1)*

*“...which He **promised beforehand** through His prophets **in the holy Scriptures**...” (1:2)*

- “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1)
- “*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*” (Luke 24:27)
- “*Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”* (Luke 24:27, 44)

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*“concerning His Son... born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared **the Son of God**...” (1:3, 4)*

- The focus of this good news, the gospel, promised through the ages in Sacred Writ, is the Son of God!

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Consider the tight parallelism of thought between these two passages (Isaiah 9 & Romans 1).

- And note that this concept of “Son” is not new to the New Testament. Observe Psalm 2 & Proverbs 30!
- John 1:1-3, 14 **God in the flesh**

“the obedience of faith...” (1:5)

- A Person who claims faith in Jesus Christ but whose life is in complete disobedience to God's word has not been redeemed and is living a lie.
- Faith that does not manifest itself in obedience is worthless (James 2:14-26).
- While we are not saved by our works, we nevertheless are saved toward good works!

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:8-10)

- It is not that faith plus obedience equals salvation, but rather that faith is the obedience that leads to salvation. True faith is verified in obedience. Obedient faith proves itself true, whereas disobedient faith proves itself false.
- Ponder again the full meaning of the term “slave” (doulos), and how it relates to the most frequently used title for God in the Scripture: Lord. God's Lordship speaks of His sovereign right to order and rule all things and all peoples.
- Thus to belong to God in a relationship of obedience is to recognize that salvation includes being in submission to His Lordship. The Scriptures recognize no other saving relationship to Jesus Christ.
- Here Paul speaks of that which is the calling of every believer. We are to proclaim by word and deed Jesus Christ to all men, in the hope of bringing them to the obedience of faith.

“to all... beloved of God... called as saints: Grace to you and peace...” (1:7)

- “*holy ones*”; not a separate category established by the Church
- Observe that Grace precedes peace, necessarily.

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you...” (1:8)

- MacArthur observes here that the first mark of true spiritual service is thankfulness. A thankful heart.
- Here is a heart inclined towards thanksgiving and gratitude. Thus this heart is not inclined towards discontentment, grumbling and ingratitude.
- Too many churches are full of unthankful discontented believers and in turn pastored by discontented ungrateful pastors.

- For what are we living? Are we pondering things eternal or temporal? Thankfulness... Paul will return to it shortly.

“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers,” (1:9-10a)

- Observe the devotion of duty on the part of this pastoral heart in bringing before God in prayer and ongoing intercession for the believers in Rome.
- And for what did Paul pray? He prayed that God might allow him to come to them so that he might impart some spiritual gift. And what might be the manner of this?
- While the topic of spiritual gifts is certainly taught in the New Testament, observe the deeper level of spiritual blessings focused on in Paul’s prayers for the churches:

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3:14-19)

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” (Phil 1:9-11)

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,” (Col 1:9-11)

- There is a world of difference between the content of our prayers and yes, even the prayers offered in our churches and the apostolic prayers. What does this say about us? What does this say about what fills our thoughts and hearts?

“I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish...” (vs. 14)

- Observe the motivation of Paul’s life and ministry. He was “under obligation”.

- In other words he was under compulsion, as he said to the Corinthians, *“For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship.”* (1 Cor 9:16-17)
- Why are you doing what you are doing? Why are you desiring what you desire? Are you currently where your sovereign Lord has called you to be? Are you moving in that direction?
- Pray until you have burning within you, pressing down upon you, a sense of obligation... a sense of a stewardship entrusted to you...

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel...” (1:16)

- “Although every true believer knows it is a serious sin to be ashamed of his Savior and Lord, he also knows the difficulty of avoiding that sin. When we have opportunity to speak for Christ, we often do not.
- We know the gospel is unattractive, intimidating, and repulsive to the natural, unsaved person and to the ungodly spiritual system that now dominates the world.
- The gospel exposes man’s sin, wickedness, depravity, and lostness, and it declares pride to be despicable and works righteousness to be worthless in God’s sight.
- To the sinful heart of unbelievers, the gospel does not appear to be good news but bad, and when they first hear it they often react with disdain against the one presenting it or throw out arguments and theories against it.
- For that reason, fear of men and of not being able to handle their arguments is doubtlessly the single greatest snare in witnessing.
- The so-called health and wealth gospel that has swept through much of the church today is not offensive to the world because it offers what the world wants.
- But that is not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus strongly condemned the motives of worldly success and comfort.
- Paul’s passion was not to make the believers feel good about themselves. It was not to enable them toward self-actualization. It was not to promote blessings from God in the temporal realm
- Paul’s passion was to see doomed dead men saved, and once saved, to see them yield entire submission, as slaves, to the Lord Jesus Christ, growing up into the full maturity of Christ as Head over those He has redeemed.

“for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (1:16)

- *Dunamis*
- It is the Gospel which carries the omnipotence of God, whose power alone is sufficient and able to save dead men from sin and give them eternal life.
- *“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1)*
- *“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20)*
- *“For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (Romans 10:3, 4)*
- *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)*
- *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)*
- There is one means of salvation and one alone. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The reason this is true comes next...

*“For in it **the righteousness of God** is revealed” (1:17)*

- The righteousness of God described here is not a Divine attribute such as rectitude, justness, goodness or veracity.
- Observe it is a righteousness attained by faith
- Here the Gospel reveals a righteousness which God gives!
- Understand that Scripture presents God as the Judge of the universe.
- Man is placed under a law which is the rule of his duty, the standard by which he shall be judged.
- Those who comply with the demands of this law are seen, judicially, in God's eyes as “just” or “righteous”.

- Those who break the law are judicially judged as “unrighteous”.
- When God pronounces one in perfect conformity to the Law’s demands, it is called “justification”.
- The problem is that the Scriptures teach that no man, in himself, is righteous in God’s sight.
- *“There is none righteous, no not one; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*
- It is further taught that no man can make himself righteous. The reason is that the Law demands perfect obedience; an obedience that no man can render.
- It is thus plain that by works of the law, no flesh will be justified... no flesh will be legally declared, “righteous” or “just”, in His eyes.
- Thus there is nothing in ourselves that can gain this judicial decree. There is nothing we can do that can gain it.
- It was the happiest day in Luther’s life when he discovered that “God’s righteousness” as used in Romans means God’s verdict of righteousness upon the believer. He says that it was like opening Paradise to him, that he at once ran through the Scripture with ecstasy, seeing everywhere how this righteousness opened salvation and heaven to him.
- The righteousness of God is the status of righteousness into which the penitent trusting sinner is placed by Divine judicial decree!
- Here is the end of all our righteousness which is not righteousness at all but only filthy rags. Here, indeed, is God’s righteousness made ours by his verdict in response to faith.
- It is essential here to know that righteousness is juridical. In other words, by his verdict God, the Judge of heaven & earth, pronounces the believing sinner “just” and by that pronouncement places the believer into the status of righteousness where he remains as long as he is of faith.
- Wonder of wonders, the gospel presents the good news that Christ is our righteousness. That God has clothed us in Christ’s righteousness and no longer pronounces us damned, but “just”!
- Here is the wonder of the gospel! That through Christ, and what He achieved on the cross, God now offers mankind a **“God-righteousness”!** Here is not a self-help program. It is a God’s righteousness that He offers through faith in Jesus Christ.

- This God-righteousness, being God’s very righteousness, has God as its author. Thus it is a righteousness that must elicit Divine approval; for it is the very righteousness of God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- The emphasis here rests on its Divine property and is therefore contrasted not just with human unrighteousness but also with human righteousness!
- *Man-righteousness*, even if perfect and measuring up to all the demands of God’s perfection, would still be utterly inadequate to the situation created by our sins.
- This is the glory of the gospel! That as it is God’s power operative unto salvation so also it is God’s righteousness supervening upon our sin and ruin.
- Nothing serves to point up the effectiveness, completeness and absolute security of the justification which is by faith than this which is set forth at the beginning – the righteousness which is unto justification is one characterized by the perfection belonging to all that God is and does. It is a **“God-righteousness!”**
- Eternally blessed is His title and office as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek; whose name meant *King of Righteousness* and *King of Peace!*

“from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the just shall live by faith.’”(1:17)

- A word of caution. While we fix attention on each single concept, we must ever keep the sentence as Paul wrote it, *“The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.”*
- The emphasis is both on the *“God-righteousness”* now revealed, and on the way in which this righteousness is received; *“from faith to faith!”*
- The appeal to Habakkuk 2:4 is for the purpose of confirmation from the Old Testament. The faith of Abraham has always been the way God saved sinners.
- Observe the centrality of faith in vs. 17! Three times, “Faith, faith, faith!”

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...” (1:18)

- From 1:18 to 3:20 the theme is the universality of sin and condemnation. *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”* (3:23). *“There is none righteous, no, not one”* (3:10). *“Every mouth is stopped and the whole world made subject to the judgment of God”* (3:19).

- Paul’s design in establishing this thesis is plainly seen in 3:20 when he says that from works of law no flesh shall be pronounced “just” in God’s sight.
- In other words, the design is to show that the salvation provided in the gospel is the need of all and that the power of God operative unto salvation comes only through the gift of a “God-righteousness” on the basis of faith.
- This initial section (1:18-32) deals with the sin, apostasy and degeneration of the Pagan world.
- The word “*revealed*” with which verse 18 begins in the Greek text has, for this reason, distinct emphasis. It corresponds to the same word in verse 17, but with an entirely different subject, thus thrusting the subject of vs. 18 into prominence.
- “The wrath of God” stands in obvious antithesis to “*the righteousness of God*” in vs. 17. This fact of antithesis shows unmistakably that “*the righteousness of God*” (vs.17) is not the attribute of justice, but rather is the righteousness provided in the gospel to meet the imminent threat of God’s wrath.
- It weakens the biblical concept of the wrath of God, to deprive it of its emotional and affective character.
- Wrath in God must not be conceived of in terms of the fitful passion with which anger is frequently associated in us. But to construe God’s wrath as consisting simply in his purpose to punish sin is to virtually eliminate wrath as a movement within the mind of god.
- “Wrath is the holy revulsion of God’s being against that which is the contradiction of his holiness.” (John Murray)
- The passion which is called anger or wrath, and which is always mixed more or less with malignity in the human heart, is of course infinitely removed from what the word means in reference to God.

“*against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*” (1:18)

- “*Ungodliness*” refers to perversity that is religious in character, “*unrighteousness*” to what is moral; the former is illustrated by idolatry, the latter by immorality.
- The order is significant. In this God-breathed description of degeneracy, impiety is the precursor of immorality.
- It all begins with a suppression of the truth. A desire for falsehood. A desire to change reality.

“God gave them over...” (1:24, 26, 28)

- Five Greek words are used here of significance: *Akatharsia* (167); *Atimia* (819); *Pathos* (3806); *Adokimos* (96) & *Nous* (3563).
- *Akatharsia* – “Impurity” vs. 24; from the negative *a* and *kathairo* (2508) to cleanse; uncleanness, filth, incontinence, any unnatural pollution, whether acted out by oneself or with another.
- *Atimia* – “degrading” vs. 26; disgrace, dishonor, shame, vileness.
- *Pathos* – “passions” vs. 26; from *petho*, to wound; vile affections; lusts that dishonor those that indulge in them. “*Pathos* is the souls diseased condition out of which the various lusts spring.”
- *Adokimos* – “depraved” vs. 28; from the negative *a* and *dokimos* (1384) acceptable; to be proved or tried as metal by fire. Hence, *adokimos* means worthless, void of value, reprobate.
- *Nous* – “mind” vs. 28; the organ of mental perception and apprehension. The faculty of thought.

“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.” (1:24)

- Here the principle of retribution stands out; God’s judgment on sin. The retribution consists in God relaxing the Divine restraints.
- “It needs to be noted that the penalty inflicted belongs to the moral sphere as distinguished from the religious – religious degeneracy is penalized by abandonment to immorality; sin in the religious realm is punished by sin in the moral sphere.” (Murray, John)
- The uncleanness to which they were given up did not take its origin from the judicial act. The uncleanness had already existed. They had already developed an appetite for it. And God just let go of the Divine restraint of mercy.
- The way this word “uncleanness” is used elsewhere as well as in this context reveal it to be that of sexual deviation (see also 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:7)
- Observe that through this being given over to uncleanness their “bodies are dishonored”.

- Murray says, “God’s displeasure is expressed in his abandonment of the persons concerned to more intensified and aggravated cultivation of the lusts of their own hearts with the result that they reap for themselves a correspondingly greater toll of retributive vengeance.” (p.45)

*“For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than **the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen.**” (1:25)*

- Observe that man will worship something. Something will receive his attention, devotion, love, adoration; soul-hunger. And if not the Creator God transcendent above the cosmos, what then? Man’s gaze inevitably must turn to the created realm itself.
- Here again is the corrupted and perverted worship of vs. 23 as man exchanges the glory due God and focuses his soul-hunger on images. Images of what? His neighbor; “corruptible man”. Here is the essence of pornography. Here is the prohibition of the 2nd Commandment. Pornography is worship sunk in the filth of baseness.
- The doxology is a spontaneous outburst of adoration evoked by the mention of God as “the Creator” and in reaction against the dishonor described in the preceding clauses.
- Strictly speaking it is not a doxology. It is an affirmation of the blessedness that is God’s. It is an affirmation that transcendent blessedness belongs to God and the implication is that the dishonor done by men does not detract from this intrinsic and unchangeable blessedness - God is blessed forever!

*“For this reason **God gave them over to degrading passions ...**” (1:26)*

- What these lusts are is not left undefined. *“Their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.”*
- It is apparent what is in view here, and in vs. 27, is the homosexual abomination. That the women are first mentioned accentuates the grossness of the evil.
- As Murray says, “It is the delicacy which belongs to the woman that makes more apparent the degeneracy of homosexual indulgence in their case.” (p.47)
- The stress here falls upon the *unnatural* character of the vice and in this, as also in vs. 27, consists the peculiar gravity of the abomination.
- The clear implication is that however grievous is fornication or adultery, the desecration involved in homosexuality is on a lower place of degeneracy; of reprobateness; it is unnatural and therefore manifests a perversion at an even deeper level.

“...and in the same way also the men abandoned the **natural function of the woman and burned in their desire** toward one another, men with men committing **indecent acts** and receiving in their own persons **the due penalty of their error.**” (1:27)

- Three expressions are of special note:
 1. “*Leaving the natural use of the woman.*” The honourableness of the heterosexual act is implied and its propriety is grounded in the natural constitution established by God. The offence of homosexuality is the abandonment of the divinely constituted order with regard to sexuality. (see 1 Corinthians 7:1-7)
 2. Ponder the phrase “*burned*” in their lust one toward another. The intensity of the lust is clearly indicated in the term “*burned*”. Here is the burning of an insatiable lust that has no natural or legitimate desire of which the lust is the perversion or distortion. It is lust directed to something that is essentially and under all circumstances illegitimate. This is the *bentness* of “iniquity” at a far baser level than adultery.
 3. “*Men with men committing indecent acts*” (NASV); “*shameless acts*” (ESV). Here is clearly indicated the cumulative force of the indictment leveled against the vice in question.
- The concluding part of the verse adds a new element. They are said to receive “in their own persons the due penalty of their error.” One commentator says, the recompense itself consists, in “the gnawing unsatisfied lust itself, together with the dreadful physical and moral consequences of debauchery.” (see Murray, John, quoting Shedd: *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary upon the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*).
- We are thus prepared for the further manifestation of God’s judicial abandonment in the verses that follow.

“*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper...*” (1:28)

- The preceding verses have revealed that the retribution thus far was in the realm of sexual perversion; twistedness. Thus does God reveal that the homosexual abominations are the most overt evidences of the degeneracy to which God in His wrath gives over peoples.
- But here in vs. 28, we see that God’s judicial abandonment is not confined to that form of degradation. We are given a virtual catalogue of other vices to which nations are given over.

- The retribution is that “God gave them over to a reprobate mind”, to a mind that is rejected because it is now worthless (see 1 Cor 9:27; 2 Cor 13:5-7; 2 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:16; Heb 6:8)
- A reprobate or depraved mind is one abandoned or rejected by God and therefore not fit for any activity worthy of esteem or praise.
- Here the judgment of God falls upon the very seat of thought and action.

“...*being filled with all...*” (1:29-31)

- The length and variety of vices named is stunning. It is a picture of utmost degeneracy.

“...*but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*” (1:32)

- This concluding verse may well be regarded as the culminating indictment against those the apostle has been describing.
- The extreme gravity of their offence consists in this that they offer their praise and backing to the perpetrators of vice.
- Observe three things, stunningly frightening:
 1. The most degraded of men, degraded because judicially abandoned by God, are not destitute of the knowledge of God and His righteous judgments. In terms of 2:14 & 15, their conscience asserts itself.
 2. This knowledge does not of itself prevent these same persons from indulging the sins which they know merit the judgment of god and issue in death.
 3. The knowledge of God’s righteous judgment does not create any hatred of sin nor does it foster any disposition toward repentance.

At this point unregenerate, rebellious and abandoned man is frighteningly close to that path embraced by Lucifer himself. The most damning condition is not the practice of iniquity, however much that may evidence our abandonment of God and abandonment to sin. It is that together with the practice there is also the support of others in the practice of the same.

To put it bluntly, we are not only bent on damning ourselves but we congratulate others in the doing of those things that we know have their issue in damnation.

We hate others as we hate ourselves and render therefore to them the approval of what we know merits damnation. Iniquity is most aggravated when it meets with no inhibition from the disapproval of others and when there is collective, undissenting

approbation. At this point the culture is abandoned by God; damned. (from Murray, *Romans*)

Exegesis of Romans 2:1-16

“Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?” (2:1-3)

- Here the thought of Paul turns from the Pagan to the Moralistic; be he Jew or Gentile, though probably Jew.
- Paul here addresses the man acting as a judge within his heart. By presuming to be pass judgment on his neighbor, with whom he is under the same condemnation, causes him to become worse even than the one he judges.
- For all are locked in the prison under a blanket condemnation, yet this judge is thrust into the inner prison where only the worst are confined.

“Many a pulpit today has in it a duplicate of Paul’s “man passing judgment”. These judges use the pulpit for their pronouncements. Hear how they blast the wickedness of men all about them. They seek to create a sensation. The papers print and applaud. The man who preaches law and gospel like Paul and those who repent and believe get a long column of silence in the papers.” (Hodge, p.132-133)

- What Paul says here is that the moment this judging person opens his mouth, whether to acquit or to condemn, by the mere fact of judging he condemns himself. The self-condemnation lies in this that this judge commits the very things which he judges.
- Of course, not for one moment has he realized this. Verse 3 shows what he thought.
- While no specific sins are mentioned, the best commentary on “the same things” is that given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:20ff)...
- How ought God-fearing teachers respond to this? Hodge says, “When true Christians voice God’s judgment on the basis of this Word they first bow to it themselves in true repentance.” (Hodge, p.134)
- But instead of this, this zealous moralist uses what he knows of the judgment of God to censor others all the while presuming that it is not necessary to investigate his own personal standing in relation to that judgment.

- In verse 3 observe the inner motivation of the moralist. Because of their moralistic activity they count on escaping God’s judgment. By calling on others to reform, by denouncing those who will not, they take for granted that they will escape.
- Paul’s question strongly asserts they shall not.

*“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that **the kindness of God leads you to repentance**? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart **you are storing up wrath** for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds...” (2:4-6)*

- In verse 4 Paul asks a 2nd question, but this time the focus is not the moralist’s sin, but on the kindness of God.
- “God has been mighty good to him despite his excessive moralistic guilt. But instead of appreciating that, looking up to the divine purpose of it, in his moralistic pride he looks down on it, ‘despises’ it by disregarding its real purpose, yea, by counting it as God’s approval of moralism and of his activity in judging other sinners.” (Hodge, p.137)
- Scripture puts the great objects of God’s gracious heart forward: *“riches of His kindness”, “forbearance” and “patience”*.
- **“Kindness”** – *Chrestotes* (#5544); benignity, kindness, opposite of severity. “It is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would have been harsh and austere. Thus wine is *chrestos* (#5543), mellowed with age (Luke 5:39); Christ’s yoke is *chrestos*, as having nothing harsh or galling about it (Matthew 11:30). Contrast *agathosune* (#19), it (#5544) pertains to character without the necessary altruistic externalization found in *agathosune*, active benignity. *Chrestotes* has only the harmlessness of the dove, not the wisdom of the serpent which *agathosune* may have indicated in sharpness and rebuke.” (Zodhiates, *Lexical Aids to the New Testament*)
- **“Forbearance”** – *Anoche* (#463); forbearance, from *anechomai* (#430), to bear with or to hold up. In other words, God holds up the judgment which imminently hangs over guilty mankind. The figure is that of a load that God bears, which men heap up more and more, making it heavier and heavier. The wonder of it all is that God holds any of it up even for a day; yet he holds up all its weight and does not let it crash down on the sinner.
- **“Patience”** – *Makrothumia* (#3115); a long-holding of the mind before it gives room to action or passion, it is patience in respect to persons while *hupomone* (#5281), endurance, is patience toward things or circumstances. Thus, *hupomone* is never used with reference to God.

- Whatever this moralist thinks of God's abounding benefit which is continuously showered upon all sinners, the thought that it has anything to do with repentance, especially his own, never occurs to him. Dreaming that the judgment of God will not strike him, why should he think of anything like repentance and the fact that this divine benefit is crying out to him to repent?
- Here is an excellent and clear statement of the purpose of God's beneficent providence upon a world of sinners! All of it is aimed at repentance so that, when God comes with his law and His gospel, men may bow in contrition and faith; including the self-justifying moralist!
- "Stubbornness" or "hardness" – *Sklerotes* (#4643); from *skleros* (#4642), dried, stiff, is the hardness or stiffness that will not bend. The figure is not that of a rock that is hard but that of a dried-out, dead branch. One article connects the two terms and makes them one concept. The Greek had no abstract term to match "stiffness," so Paul used the adjective "unrepentant" and combined it with "heart." The hardness consists in impenitence, and this refers to what Paul has just said regarding God's purpose to attain repentance.

Repentance has been defeated, thus far, in this moralist, and therefore, wrath is his lot. Note that Paul identifies, even fixes the "heart" as the seat of the trouble in the center of the personality, for in the heart the ego (self) dwells.

- Note that Paul says that this moralizing judge is accumulating more and more divine wrath against himself as one accumulates a great treasure. He is hoarding it so that none of this wrath will fail to descend upon his head. The amount of this treasure of wrath he makes as large as possible!" (Lenski, p.142)
- With this frightening reality, Paul seeks to demolish this man's delusion, stunning the self deluded man in order to break up his hard and impenitent heart. "All reform that leaves the heart hard and obstructs true repentance only heaps up the wrath instead of making escape sure. The warning that lies in this even for us Christians should also be clear." (Lenski, p.142)
- The phrase "*righteous judgment*" indicates that all will know the justness of God's judicial wrath filled decrees! Even the damned will know that their eternal damnation is righteous! The implication is that now we see many preliminary judgments of God intermingled with restraints, patience, long-suffering even beneficence which are often very puzzling even to mature Christians. But on that last day, not a soul will question a single judgment of God's will due to the revelation God makes (objectively) and to the moral nature of they that stand before the great white Throne.

"Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. 'Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; for all the nations will come and worship before Thee, for Thy judgments have been made manifest!" (Revel 15)

- Of verse 6 it is critical to recognize that this description presents the judgment as it will actually occur, exactly as Jesus describes it in Matthew 25, to say nothing of many other passages.

“to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.” (2:7-11)

- The question of verses 7 – 10 is “whether the apostle is speaking of the judgment that will actually take place or whether he is speaking hypothetically. The latter supposition has appealed to some interpreters because, if men are to be judged according to their works, would this not contradict the thesis of this epistle that by works shall no man be justified?.. Hence it has been maintained that the apostle ‘speaks of law only, not of the gospel. He describes the legal position upon which man stands by creation irrespective either of apostasy or redemption, in order to exhibit the principles upon which reward and penalty are distributed under the divine government.’ (Murray quoting Shedd, p.62)
- I disagree and believe the apostle is here describing the actual events of the last day...
- “It is true that his main purpose is to prove that all are under sin and that by the works of law shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight. And it is also true that not until 3:21 does he begin to unfold in detail the theme of justification by grace through faith. But we may not forget that in 1:3, 4 he had defined that with which the gospel is concerned and in 1:16, 17 he had stated the grand theme of the epistle.
- Furthermore, in this passage (vs. 16) he appeals to that which is specifically the gospel doctrine of the judgment and in 2:28, 9 he establishes what has no relevance apart from the gospel.
- Finally, the assertive way in which the apostle speaks in this passage of what will be revealed, in the day of judgment, constrains the conclusion that the apostle thus speaks, not in the way of abstract hypothesis, but of concrete assertion... He says not what God would do were He to proceed in accordance with the primal rule and standard of the law, but what, proceeding according to the rule, He will actually do. (from Murray, p.62-63)
- The just, in verse 7, are described as seeking “glory, honor and immortality”. The three terms summarizing that which believers aspire to.
- Murray says, “The three terms have indisputably in the usage of Paul redemptive associations, and this consideration of itself makes it impossible to think that the

eschatological aspiration referred to is anything less than that provided by redemptive revelation. The three words define aspiration in terms of the highest reaches of Christian hope.” (p.64)

- Observe the role of endurance in vs. 7. Here is the endurance Jesus spoke of when he said, “But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

This is the endurance that finishes the course (2 Timothy 4:7,8) and does not shrink back (Hebrews 10:39). The word is *hupomone* (#5281) and means “to remain under.” As mentioned before, the word is never used with reference to God and always refers to things and not persons. Thus here it brings out the thought of the load that a good work is.

“In a wicked world we are constantly tempted to throw of the burden, to remain under it no longer, to run free in the false freedom of those who do evil as they please.” (Lenski, p. 150)

But only those who hold out shall be saved. The continuance in faith is evidenced by the endurance in the good work.

- Murray says, “Works without redemptive aspiration are dead works. Aspiration without good works is presumption.” (p.64)
- Observe the lot of those who are “selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness...”

For these “wrath” and “indignation” (wrath’s hot outburst), both come from God and as a result are closely joined experiences: “tribulation” in the sense of pressure and thus “distress” or a narrowing in of body and soul.

This is the same wrath spoken of in verse 5. It is the wrath of God unrestrained and unrelieved in contrast with the forbearance and longsuffering of verse 4. “Indignation”, though not essentially different from wrath, reflects upon the violence of it.

Damned mankind will not know where to turn, and will cry out to the mountains, “Fall on us! Hide us from the wrath of Him Who sits upon the Throne!”

- Observe too that the priority of the Jew applies to condemnation and damnation as well as to salvation! This priority of the Jew in the execution of final punishment runs totally counter to the conceit entertained by the Jew that punitive reward is for the Gentile but not for the seed of Abraham. (Murray, p.67)
- “Verses 7 and 8 go together and show the consequence for godly and ungodly respectively of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. The construction of verses 9 and 10... is that the antithesis of vv. 7, 8 is reproduced in inverse order.

Hence there is good reason to believe that a break in the thought appears at the end of verse 8.

- Wrath and indignation describe the retribution of the ungodly in terms of the displeasure of God to which they are subjected whereas tribulation and anguish describe their punishment in terms of their experience.
- The repetition, in verse 10, of the formula, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek”, indicates that the Jew will have priority in the bestowal of glory itself. The final judgment will take account of the priority of the Jew not only in the dispensing of retribution (vs. 9) but also in the dispensing of bliss.

“For there is no partiality with God...” (2:11-16)

- Here is an axiom of ultimate and eternal reality. It is woven into the very nature and character of God. The term means to “take a man’s face” instead of judging on the basis of his works. The term is thoroughly Hebrew in thought depicting the partiality of an unjust judge. Paul says, “with God there is no taking face!” He judges on the basis of works.
- Verse 12 addresses the two classes of mankind; the Jews who had the law of God and all others who did not. And “the only difference will be that those without law will merely perish without law, while those with law will be judged by means of law – two routes that lead to the same goal.” (Lenski, p.158)
- In verse 13 the emphasis is on the difference between “hearers of the law” and “doers of the law”. The mere possession of, or knowledge of the law means nothing. It is the doing that is everything.

Ultimately, the ‘doers of law’ are those who by faith and a new heart actually do what God bids and by their doing demonstrate their faith so that in the public judgment at the last day God can point to their works as the evidence on which his righteousness acquits and them. Abraham is perhaps the classic case in point here. And to this foundational Old Testament person Paul will turn in chapter four.

- Verses 14 – 15 describe the inborn God-given moral nature of every man. While in chapter one he unfolded the vast immorality of the whole world of men, he here asserts a God-written moral code on the heart of every man; even those without the blessing or benefit of the Scripture.
- “Written,” says Paul, for the Jewish law was written, and the Greeks wrote whole books on ethics. But here we have a deeper writing; one written on the very heart of man.
- Here is no moral evolution, no herd ethics, no evolving societal norms. No, here we have what is left of the general image of God in the heart of man after the fall. It is the

moral sense, damaged, distorted, corrupted, depraved, yet what remains of it is highly significant.

- Consider the word, “conscience”. The very word implies a duality. I myself know, and conscience, too, knows.
- “This is especially apparent when conscience blames me, when I should like to hush it up but find myself unable to do so and may even be driven to desperation by my conscience. It is often called the voice of God in us, but this is rather inaccurate; for conscience is not the fact that God knows and speaks in us but rather that I myself know and speak in judgment on myself.”
- “I am both judge and defendant and generally a culprit!” (Lenski, p.167)
- In reference to the judgment of believers in verse 16, John Murray makes the following observations: First, the distinction between judgment according to works and salvation on account of works needs be fully appreciated. The latter is entirely contrary to the gospel. Paul does not even speak of judgment on account of works in reference to believes. Second, believers are justified by faith alone and saved by grace alone. But two qualifications must be added: (1) We are never justified by a faith that is alone; (2) The concept of salvation involves what we are saved TO as well as what we are saved FROM. We are saved to holiness and good works (Eph 2:10); (3) The judgment of God must take into account the fruits in which salvation issues and which constitute the saved condition; (4) The criterion of good works is the law of God and the law of God is not abrogated for the believer. He is not without law to God; he is under law to Christ (1 Cor 9:21). (5) Good works as the evidences of faith and of salvation by grace are therefore the criteria of judgment and to suppose that the principle, ‘*Who will render to every man according to this his works*’ (vs. 6), has no relevance to the believer would be to exclude good works from the indispensable place which they occupy in the biblical doctrine of salvation. (Murray, p.79)

Exegesis of Romans 2:17-3:8

“But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God...” (2:17-29)

- In verses 1 – 16 Paul has considered all moralists, both “Jew and Gentile” (vss. 9, 10).
- But now, he turns his attention to the one who proudly claims the name “Jew” and asserts that he is under double guilt. We here meet, not a representative of Jews in general, but a representative of the Jewish moralists; in other words the scribes & pharisees.
- This type is quite familiar to us from the Gospels. Consider how Jesus responded to them in Matt. 23:13.

- “The Greek moralist and his moralism were bad enough for the gospel, but the Jewish moralist was the worst of all. When, however, Paul exposes the moralist’s self-conviction he does it in order to destroy the effect of his moralism upon all Christians and at the same time, if possible, to save the moralists themselves from their moralism by means of the gospel.” (Lenski, p.178)
- Observe that “each statement contains the next. Open the first box and you see the second; open the second, and there is the third; and so on to the last. To be a real Jew means really to rest on law; to rest on law means really to glory in God, thus really to know the Will, thus really to test out the essentials.”
- Here these actions are prefaced by the assumptive “if”; but they are one and all most excellent, blessed and lead to heaven! If this man were what he claims to be, and if he did all these things, he would be saved and all who heard and heeded him, for then he would not in any sense be a moralist.” (Lenski, p.180)
- Observe that a genuine Jew is (1st) a man of law who (2nd) hungers after God, (3rd) seeks God’s will and (4th) tests out the essential things of salvation.
- They had great pride in knowing the Scripture. Furthermore, they laid claim to glorying in God as their highest treasure. They believed themselves to know the will of God and to be able to test out the essential things of His word.
- Lenski says, “Law – God – the Will – the essentials are like the bellows of a camera, fold is drawn out of fold, each is held to the next.” (p.181)
- Observe the four things predicated of this moralist, in his own mind & assessment:

First, he was a guide to the blind.

Second, he was a light to those in darkness.

Third, he was an instructor of the foolish.

Fourth, he was a teacher of children!

This guy feels capable of serving and guiding anybody and everybody with his superior knowledge & morality. And why not? For this man had, in the law, the very embodiment of knowledge & truth! He understood the superior nature of sacred Scripture.
- As Murray says, “In the law the Jew had in his possession the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth in well-defined and articulated form.” (p.83)

- John Murray says that this immediate passage reveals “how close lies the grossest vice to the highest privilege and how the best can be prostituted to the service of the worst.” (p.82)
- “The apostle now turns to the overt rebuke for which the admissions of the three preceding verses prepared. He sets forward a “series of pungent questions, founded on these admissions... and put in startling contrast with them, brings out the flagrant inconsistency between profession and practice!” (Murray, p.83)
- Observe that the first question is general, “You then who teach others do you not teach yourself?”
- “The other questions are concrete and specific and give illustrations of the teaching imparted to others but not practiced by the Jew himself. They concern theft, adultery and idolatry.”
- Here the apostle goes to the heart of the law in which the Jew gloried. For nothing brought out the scorn of the Jew for the pagan more than their idolatry. And how they looked down on the gentiles for their sexual immoralities!
- In verse 24, the reasoning of the Gentiles is to the effect that a people are like their God and if the people can perpetrate such crimes their God must be of the same character!
- “The tragic irony is apparent. The Jews who claimed to be the leaders of the nations for the worship of the true God had become the instruments of provoking the nations to blasphemy. With this the indictment has reached its climax.” (Murray, p.85)
- At this point, in verse 25, the apostle “pursues the Jew into his last retreat... and proceeds to strip them of the last refuge to which they usually betook themselves, their illusive trust in the possession of circumcision.” The implication of this verse is that circumcision, for the Jew, was a liability in that it only increased the condemnation!
- Verses 26 & 27 present essentially a hypothetical statement designed to show that everything depends on obedience, and that circumcision cannot be the ground either of justification or condemnation.
- Perhaps the most salient point we may draw here is that God looks not on who has the relics, traditions and ritualistic rules. That which matters to God is obedience to His word. Thus, righteousness, or straightness when measured against the law, is the standard by which both circumcised and uncircumcised shall be judged.
- Now consider the stunning conclusion of verses 28 & 29! The apostle now shows that which truly constitutes a person a Jew and that in which circumcision truly consists.

- Paul's thought is that the outward has no spiritual significance except as the sign and seal of that which it represents, and the true circumcision is that work of grace in the heart which the external rite signifies.
- Thus Paul is saying that the true circumcision is within, it is spiritual, and it is wrought by the Holy Spirit and not by the law or keeping the law. Now does this harmonize with scripture elsewhere?
- Consider Colossians 2:11; "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ!"
- The theology of the New Testament teaching on circumcision is that the physical act was the type of the New Covenant fulfillment. And what is that New Covenant fulfillment? It is the spiritual circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29), the "putting off the body of the flesh" (Col 2:11), the "circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11).
- Old Covenant circumcision did not prefigure paedobaptism. Infant sprinkling is not the New Covenant counterpart to Old Covenant circumcision.
- Old Covenant circumcision prefigured the New Covenant's inner putting off the body of the flesh from the heart by the Spirit of God! The physical act was the type of a spiritual reality that would be done by God the Holy Spirit within the penitent trusting sinner. Old Covenant circumcision is not replaced by paedobaptism.
- "St. Paul, in like manner alluding to the meaning of the name, says of the true Jew that his praise is not from men, but from God. There is undoubtedly, however, a combination of reasons why the apostle should have alluded to this original significance of the name "Jew".
- He is striking again at what lies in the background of his thought throughout this chapter and which forms the basis of his indictment against the Jew, namely, the iniquity of reliance upon appearance and upon what passes muster in this judgment of men. It is the application to the subject in hand of the word of the Lord himself: *'How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?'* (John 5:44)

"Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God." (3:1-2)

- Paul's foregoing argument respecting the ineffectiveness of circumcision of the flesh when it is not joined with the spiritual circumcision that is of the heart, might appear to make of no avail God's institutions under the Old Testament.

- Indeed it might seem that circumcision created disadvantage and liability rather than privilege.
- Paul's thought here is that although the external ritual is of no worth when it is accompanied by transgression of the law, yet this does not make void the advantage that was the Jews' the depository of Divine blessing.
- Murray accurately comments, "The direction of the apostle's thought here is relevant as rebuke to much that is current in the attitude of the present day, namely, neglect of, if not contempt for, institutions which God has established in the church, on the plausible plea that in many cases those who observe these institutions do not prove faithful to their intent and purpose.
- Ponder: We might expect the apostle to name several aspects of the advantage which was the Jews'. In fact he will do so later when he says that to Israel was, "*the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises*" (9:4)
- But this is not what we find. He names one thing and is content with that. He appeals to that which was preeminent in the privileges of the Jews - "*they were entrusted with the oracles of God.*"
- This expression "oracles of God" is particularly significant. He is thinking of the Old Testament in its entirety. Furthermore, these Scriptures were no less the speech or sayings of God than were the divine utterances which prophets received directly from the mouth of God.
- "For Paul the written Word is God's speech, and God's speech is conceived of as existing in the form of a 'trust' to Israel; divine oracles have fixed and abiding form." (Murray, p.93)
- "What a distinction and honor! What a high position among all nations! The Jews were God's great depository to administer his Word to all the world." (Lenski, p.211)
- Thus, Paul asserts that there is one great advantage in having God's Word, and the Jew as well as we Christian have that advantage. The Holy Scripture works the actual realization of sin (3:1-20) and thereby prepares for the gospel, for faith in the revelation of the saving righteousness of God in Christ (3:21ff).

"...from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15)

- “What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, ‘That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.’” (3:3-4)
- Here is the difficulty. While the Jews had this tremendous advantage of the very oracles of God entrusted to them, the greatest part of them proved unfaithful. Paul answers the objector who asserts that the failure of the Jews to represents a failure on the part of God Himself.
- Paul argues, “how can anyone seriously connect the unfaithfulness of the Jews with their being entrusted with his Word by God?” (Lenski, p.213)
- Paul strongly asserts “Let God be true though every one were a liar!” Thus he places front & center the absolute faithfulness of God.
- He declares, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged!” The imagery is that of a court in which God is put on trial.
- Observe this strange thought: the great Judge of all lets the universe of angels and of men judge him together with all his words and acts in order to see whether there is one instance of unfaithfulness. Stunning!

“But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) 6 By no means! For then how could God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? 8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.” (2:5-8)

- There is here another angle of thought. Of course, the Gentile, pagan unrighteousness makes God's righteousness stand out, but it does not do so nearly so much as the far blacker unrighteousness of men who were and are unfaithful to God's Word.
- Thus, strange as it may seem, it is not our righteousness but our unrighteousness that brings about this effect. One light does not make another light stand out, but deep darkness does. Day hides the stars, night shows them in their brilliance. (Lenski, p.218-219)
- Stunning to realize that it is this unrighteousness, possible only where one has the Word, which sets God's righteousness in the boldest relief. Although it is itself so bad, it yet has so good, so noble an effect. The question Paul addresses then is does this reflect negatively on God's righteousness?

- By no means! Perish the thought! It is an absolute axiom of truth that God will judge the world in righteousness. Any notion that implies unrighteousness in Him is soundly rebuked by Paul!
- The blasphemous question of verse 8 is answered bluntly. “Their condemnation is just.”
- Observe, that when our sin makes God's faithfulness, righteousness, and truth stand out, this is due, not to a service which we render to God, but a service which God forces out sin to render Him. His great attributes need nothing from us, least of all our sin to make them stand out in contrast. Rightly He damns the sinner, especially the one to whom he has given the tremendous advantage of His Word and who abuses that advantage. (Lenski, p.227)

“What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one...'” (3:9-18)

- Paul here elaborates a frightful picture of the utter depravity and sinfulness of mankind. “While the whole is a mosaic, it is conceived as a unit and is not a loose aggregation.” (Lenski, p.231)
- Paul has selected a series of indictments drawn from the Old Testament and covering the wide range of human character and activity to reveal that, from whatever aspect mankind is viewed, the verdict of Scripture is one of universal depravity.
- The quotations of verses 10-18 are not derived from any one place in the Old Testament. “The apostle places together various passages which when thus combined provide a unified summary of the witness of the Old Testament to the pervasive sinfulness of mankind.” (Murray, p.102)
- The first two clauses of verse 13 are a verbatim quotation from the Hebrew and Greek of Psalm 5:10 and the last clause is similarly from the LXX of Psalm 139:4 with which the Hebrew of Psalm 140:4 is practically identical. Verse 14 corresponds rather closely to the Hebrew of psalm 10:7 (cf. LXX of Psalm 9:28). Verse 15 is taken from Isaiah 59:7 but is an abbreviated form of what we find in both Hebrew and Greek, an abbreviation, however, which conveys the substantial thought. Verse 16 is also from Isaiah 59:7 and is verbatim as in the LXX with only slight, if any, divergence from the Hebrew. Verse 17 is from Isaiah 59:8 and is an exact rendering with the exception that a different verb and tense are used in the LXX for the word 'know'.
- In these verses (13-17) the apostle becomes more concrete in his indictment. This is apparent from the mention of five distinct bodily organs in the five clauses of verses 13-15, the first four being organs of speech and the fifth the feet. The concentration upon organs of speech in verses 13, 14 shows how, in the apostle's esteem, the

depravity of man is exemplified in his words and how diverse are the ways in which speech betrays the wickedness of the heart. In the words of Godet, 'the *throat* (larynx) is compared to a sepulchre; this refers to the language of the gross and brutal man, of whom it is said in common parlance: it seems as if he would like to eat you. The characteristic which follows contrasts with the former; it is the sugared *tongue*, which charms you like a melodious instrument.' Or it may well be that the throat as an open sepulchre simply reflects quite generally upon the corruption of which vile speech is the expression.

- Verse 18 is a verbatim quotation from the Hebrew of Psalm 36:2 with the exception that the apostle uses the plural pronoun. In the teaching of Scripture the fear of God is the soul of godliness and its absence the epitome of impiety. To be destitute of the fear of God is to be godless, and no indictment could be more inclusive and decisive than the charge here made.
- As the throat, tongue, lip, mouth and feet had been used in the preceding verses so here the eyes. Paul's thought is that before our eyes the thought of God should be constantly in the centre of our thought and apprehension. Our lives should be a continuous all-pervasive consciousness of dependence upon Him and responsibility to Him.
- The absence of this fear means that God is excluded not only from the centre of thought and calculation but from the whole horizon of our reckoning; God is not in all our thoughts. Figuratively, he is not before our eyes. And this is unqualified godlessness.

“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (3:19-20)

- Paul's overall point is to reveal that the law condemns all. The Old Testament brings about the full realization of sin.
- “The language is forensic. Before the judgment bar of God and his Word every mouth is stopped, silenced by the indictment of being absolutely guilty and unable to make even the least defense...The Judge looks at every individual and then at the whole mass. First, the silence of the accused; then, the verdict upon one and all.” (Lenski, p.241)
- Verse 20 gives the reason why every mouth is stopped and the whole word condemned. It is because by works of the law no flesh shall be declared justified before God.
- This does not overthrow the principle stated in 2:13 that *“the doers of the law will be justified”*. This holds true as a principle of equity but, existentially, it never comes into

operation in the human race for the reason that there are no doers of the law, no doing of the law that will ground or elicit justification – 'there is none righteous, no not one' (vs.10).

- For this reason that there is actually no justification by the works of the law the function of the law is to convince of sin (vs.20b). The law does perform this necessary and contributory service in connection with justification; it imparts the knowledge of sin and enables us to perceive that from the works of the law no flesh will be justified and therefore every mouth is stopped and the whole world rests under God's judgment. (Murray, p.106-107).

Analysis (from Hodge p.135))

Having proved that justification, on the ground of legal obedience or personal merit, is for all men impossible, Paul proceeds to unfold the glorious good news, the gospel, whereby God will save sinners through faith in Jesus Christ.

With regard to this method, he teaches,

1. Its nature.
2. The ground on which the offer of justification is made.
3. Its object.
4. Its results.

As to its nature: First, the righteousness proposed is not attainable by works, but by faith, vs. 21, 22. Second, it is adapted to all men, Jews as well as Gentiles, since there is no difference as to their moral state, vs. 22, 23. And third, it is entirely gratuitous, vs. 24.

As to its ground, the bedrock upon which the ability of God to save sinners is based is what was accomplished through the work of Christ. Two descriptives are given it in verses 24 & 25. In verse 24, it is called the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In verse 25, Jesus Christ is named a propitiation by His blood.

As to its object, it is the display of the divine perfections, and the reconciliation of the justice of God with the exhibition of mercy to the sinner, vs. 26.

As to its results, it first humbles man by excluding all ground of boasting, vs. 27, 28. Secondly, it presents God in his true character as the God and father of all men, of the Gentile no less than of the Jew, vs. 29, 30. And thirdly, it confirms the law. Observe especially vs. 31.

Exegesis of Romans 3:21 - 26

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25b whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

- Listen prayerfully to the opening verses of Psalm 143. *“Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness! Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.”*
- Consider again the words of Job. *“Can mortal man be in the right [just] before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error; how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust...”* (4:17-19)
- *“If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”* (Ps 130:3)
- Rightly does John MacArthur assess the question before us to be the same asked by Job millennia ago: *“But how can a man be in the right before God?”*
- How can I be in right standing before God? What can I do? What do I do with this pressing sense of distance, guilt and fear?
- Indeed, throughout history men have asked this very question. MacArthur says, *“Man’s sense of lostness, loneliness, emptiness, and meaninglessness is reflected in the literature and archaeological remains of every civilization. So is his fear of death, of existence, if any, beyond the grave, and of divine punishment. Nearly every religion is a response to those fears and seeks to offer a way of reaching and satisfying deity. But every religion except Christianity is man-made and works-centered, and for that reason, none of them can succeed in leading a person to God.”* (p.198)
- The astounding thing about God’s method is that righteousness is to be had by sinners wholly apart from anything like law!
- Man always makes a connection between being right with deity and performing works of law. Yet, verse 20 has tersely stated that no man, no woman, will be justified by works of law. For all the law does is reveal and subsequently convict the sinner of his sin.

The Righteousness of God

- Glory be to God that there is righteousness altogether apart from law!
Lenski says, “It is, in brief, the status of the sinner brought about by God himself (causal genitive) when he declares him righteous by his forensic act.” (p.246).
- Ponder the profound wonder that here we have a righteousness from God that is not a man-righteousness. It is a God-righteousness.
- It is utterly apart from works. It is utterly apart from the man or woman. It is not our righteousness. It is not our obedience, sanctification or anything else.
- It is a God-righteousness that has been freely offered by the offended Deity, Jehovah, LORD of hosts to sinners such as us.
- Ponder the infinite implications of a shift in thought. A shift away from thinking about salvation by thinking about myself, my works, my obedience, me sanctification. Toward a complete focus upon Christ and His works and His obedience and His holiness!
- Meditate on the very phrase, “the righteousness of God”. It is a God-righteousness that is offered in the gospel.
- Ponder some passages that highlight the reality of the contrast between a righteousness that is ours and what the Gospel declares is the “God-righteousness” offered through faith in Christ:
- *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”* (Isaiah 61:10)
- *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”* (Jeremiah 23:5,6)
- *“And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”* (1 Corinthians 1:30)
- *“And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his*

business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."
(Matthew 22:1-14)

- Remember the prodigal son of Luke 15? When the son (the sinner) returned home, who put whose robe on the prodigal?
- *"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness..."* Blessed be God for Jesus Christ! Amen.
- In verses 21 – 25, observe the following attributes of the God righteousness offered, as compared with man's righteousness...
- **First, the God righteousness offered is different because its source, its origin, is God Himself.**

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law..."

"Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the Lord have created it." (Isaiah 45:8)

The righteousness of God offered in the Gospel is a God righteousness. It is not our righteousness. It is the very righteousness of the infinitely perfect God Himself that is wrapped around us as a garment or a robe.

- **Second, the God righteousness offered is different in that it fulfills both the positive precept and negative penalty of God's law.**

The precept of God's law is every command both the letter and the spirit behind the letter. Keeping God's law thus requires absolute perfection which only the God-man has fulfilled.

Blessed be God that Jesus Christ was completely without sin!

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.” (Hebrews 7:26)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Blessed be God that Jesus Christ fulfilled all righteousness through His perfect obedience!

“But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15)

“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” (John 5:19)

Blessed be God that Jesus Christ fulfilled the negative demand of the law; wrath on sin!

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...” (1 Peter 2:24)

“Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:28)

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the

righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53)

- **Third, the God righteousness offered is unique in that it is eternal!**

It is an everlasting righteousness, from eternity to eternity!

- **Fourth, the God righteousness offered is entirely apart from law keeping! (3:21a)**

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...”

“When Paul says ‘without the law’ the absoluteness of this negation must not be toned down. He means this without any reservation or equivocation in reference to the justifying righteousness which is the theme of this part of the epistle. This implies that in justification there is no contribution, preparatory, accessory, or subsidiary, that is given by works of law. This fact is set forth here both by the expression itself and by its emphatic position in the sentence. And it is borne out by the sustained polemic of the epistle as a whole. To overlook this accent is to miss the central message of the epistle. To equivocate here is to distort what could not be more plainly and consistently stated!” (Murray, p.109)

“The Romish doctrine of justification as consisting in sanctifying grace by which sins are remitted and we are made just conceives of justification as a process and hence justification is increased by good works.” (Murray, p.109)

Here indeed is a eternally to be praised contrast – “between man’s total depravity and inability to please God and God’s own provision of a way to Himself!

Except for the introduction (1:1-18), the epistle has portrayed an utterly dark picture of man’s wickedness and hopelessness apart from God. In that introduction Paul gave a brief glimpse of light when he spoke *‘of the gospel, [which] is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’ (1:16-17)*

Now, after backing all sinful mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, into the totally dark and seemingly inescapable corner of God’s wrath (1:18 – 3:20), Paul begins to open the window of divine grace that lets in the glorious light of salvation through the righteousness that God Himself has provided.” (MacArthur, p.201)

We are told in verse 21 that this righteousness is “*apart from law*”. It is not achieved by human effort or will power. It is not found by obedience to rules and rituals. It is not the reward of being good or worthy.

This righteousness owes nothing to the sinner receiving it. This righteousness of God has its origin and source utterly apart from man; utterly apart from anything good we have ever or could ever do.

This righteousness is not a man-righteousness. It is a God-righteousness. It is a divinely achieved perfection that God the Son accomplished through His perfect life and perfect sacrifice. This robe of righteousness, wrapped around penitent trusting sinners, is the very robe of Jesus Christ.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

- **Fifth, the God righteousness was witnessed to by the Old Testament (3:21b)**

“Although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it”

Indeed, the Law and the Prophets proclaimed God’s perfect righteousness throughout, and also proclaimed that mankind was unable to achieve that righteousness.

Isaiah declares, that “*all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment*”; literally a menstrual cloth. (Isaiah 64:6)

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified... I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.” (Isa 61:1-3, 10-11)

In a nutshell, MacArthur captures the truth here, “The Law and the Prophets did not show men how to achieve their own righteousness but pointed to the coming Messiah, the Savior and Son of God, who Himself would provide the righteousness that God demands of men. Although the full revelation of salvation through Christ was not

given in the Old Testament, that had always been the way of salvation to which that testament pointed.” (p.204)

Blessed be God for the incredible foreshadowing of all this on top of Mt. Moriah as The LORD, Yahweh, Himself provided the sacrifice!

Salvation is of God from first to last! Hallelujah!

- **Sixth, the God righteousness offered is acquired through faith in Jesus Christ (3:22a)**

“The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe...”

There has always been only one path of salvation open to man following the Fall. The entire point of Hebrews 11 is to show that there never was any other means of salvation other than faith in the true God.

MacArthur says it well on page 205...

“There is, of course, such a thing as false faith, even in the name of Christ. John reports that many people who had a superficial faith in Jesus did not have saving faith. ‘Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, *‘If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of mine’* (John 8:31). In other words, obedience to His Word is evidence of true faith, whereas continual disobedience is evidence of false faith. *‘Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.’* In other words, disobedient faith is spurious faith. It is *‘by itself,’* that is, unrelated to faith in God. False faith may be faith in good works, faith in ritual, faith in a religious experience or system, faith in one’s own goodness, or simply a nebulous faith in faith that is so common in our day.”

The Scripture abundantly testifies that saving faith is immeasurably more than simply making a verbal declaration of belief about Jesus. Ponder again Tozer’s words.

“Something has happened to the doctrine of justification... The faith of Paul and Luther was a revolutionizing thing. It upset the whole life of the individual and made him into another person altogether. It laid hold on the life and brought it unto obedience to Christ. It took up its cross and followed along after Jesus with no intention of going back. It said good-bye to its old friends as certainly as Elijah when he stepped into the fiery chariot and went away in the whirlwind. It had a finality about it. It snapped shut on a man’s heart like a trap; it captured the man and made him from that moment forward a *joy filled slave* of his Lord.” (*The Root of the Righteous* [Harrisburg, PA.: Christian Publ, 1955], pp.45-46).

Here is the Reformer’s understanding of saving faith:

1. Saving faith is not mere knowledge
2. Saving faith is not mere affirmation of the truthfulness of that knowledge (James 2:17)

3. **Saving faith is penitent trust.** “Saving faith is a placing of oneself totally in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.” (MacArthur p.205)

Consider that saving faith involves the whole man; the intellect, emotions and will; the cognition, affection & volition.

MacArthur quotes 17th Century English minister Joseph Alleine (pp 206 – 207).

All of Christ is accepted by the sincere convert; he loves not only the wages, but the work of Christ; not only the benefits, but the burden of Christ; he is willing not only to tread out the corn, but to draw under the yoke; he takes up the command of Christ, yea, the cross of Christ.

The unsound closeth by halves with Christ: he is all for the salvation of Christ, but he is not for sanctification; he is for the privileges, but appropriates not the person of Christ; he divides the offices and benefits of Christ. This is an error in the foundation. Whoso loveth life, let him beware here; it is an undoing mistake, of which you have been often warned, and yet none is more common.

Jesus is a sweet name, but men ‘love not the Lord Jesus in sincerity.’ They will not have him as God offers, ‘To be a Prince and a Saviour.’ They divide what God has joined, the king and the priest; yea, they will not accept the salvation of Christ as he intends it; they divide it here.

Every man’s vote is for salvation from suffering; but they desire not to be saved from sinning; they would have their lives saved, but withal would have their lusts. Yea, many divide here again; they would be content to have some of their sins destroyed, but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias; they cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand; the Lord must pardon them in this thing. O be carefully scrupulous here; your soul depends on it.

The sound convert takes a whole Christ, and takes him for all intents and purposes, without exceptions, without limitations, without reserve. He is willing to have Christ upon any terms; he is willing to have the dominion of Christ, as well as deliverance by Christ; he saith, with Paul, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ Anything, Lord. He sends the blank [surrender sheet] to Christ, to set down his own conditions.”

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, that He has made passage from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of His beloved Son so simple that a childlike faith may gain it. Indeed, He hath said that only a childlike faith may gain it.

- **Seventh, the God righteousness offered is offered to all who believe** (3:22b-23)

“...for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)

“The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” (Revel 22:17)

“Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.” (John 6:37)

The often missed point of this passage is that its focus is that since in God’s sight there is no distinction among mankind, all those who believe will be saved.

“There is no distinction among those who are saved, because there is no distinction among those who are lost, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (MacArthur, p.207f)

- **Eighth, the God righteousness offered is entirely gratuitous (3:24a)**

“and are justified by His grace, as a gift.”

To be justified means to be legally declared, by God, as in right relationship to Him and His law.

Listen to Jesus’ words from Luke 18... *“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Observe that the Pharisee, no doubt, went home believing himself justified; in right relationship with God. He was not however. For the decree from heaven of “justified” was made only upon the humble trusting penitent.

MacArthur accurately says, “Justification is God’s declaration that all the demands of the law are fulfilled on behalf of the believing sinner through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Justification is a wholly forensic, or legal, transaction. It changes the judicial standing of the sinner before God. In Justification, God imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ to the believer’s account, then declares the redeemed one fully righteous. Justification must be distinguished from sanctification, in which God actually imparts Christ righteousness to the sinner. While the two must be distinguished, justification and sanctification can never be separated. God does not justify whom He does not sanctify.” (p.208)

Observe the clear description of “grace” as “a gift” in vs. 24. It is not a wage. It is not what was earned. It is not what was deserved. It is not what was merited. This is not only a gift, but one that is wholly undeserved.

It is entirely gratuitous, freely given, and unsolicited at that! It could not be any other way, for in the entire world of sinners there is not one iota of merit existing. The gratuity, on God’s part, is absolute.

Observe: *“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8)

Lenski here says, “The point to be noted here is the fact that sin excludes no man from being declared righteous by God... ‘Gospel justification finds as miserable sinners all to whom it comes and clothes in its garment all the destitute sinners upon whom it comes. Here we see how far the promise of the gospel extends: as far as sin extends, over the whole world; and, according to Melancthon’s admonition, we are to arm ourselves with such universal terms as all against the false notions of predestination.’” (p.250)

Lenski continues to say, “The view that faith is also barred out, that otherwise synergism results, does not understand what faith is and how it is produced. So little is faith barred out that it is always and everywhere included, and no personal justification ever takes place except ‘through faith.’” (p.251)

At this point it is important to again distinguish between “grace” and “mercy”. “Mercy” is the divine pity. “Grace connotes guilt; mercy connotes misery, the consequence of sin and guilt. Grace is thus always first, mercy second, and the two should not be reversed. Grace and not mercy pardons; mercy and not grace binds up, heals, comforts, restores. ‘Grace’ is the proper word in this connection. It is the inner motive that moves God to acquit.” (Lenski, p.251)

- **Ninth, this God righteousness was made possible through an act of redemption (3:24b)**

“...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Contemporary usage has significantly watered down the meaning of this term. It must not be reduced to the pale idea of mere liberation or release in general.

Murray says, “It is impossible to reduce the New Testament concept of redemption to the mere notion of liberation. Our Lord’s saying (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45) is expressly in terms of substitutive ransom and the giving of his life, which in the New Testament is the same as the shedding of his blood, the price of this redemption.

Hence *‘the redemption that is in Christ Jesus’* cannot be reduced to lower terms than the ransom secured by Christ in the shedding of his blood and the giving of his life.” (p.115-116)

Observe also the permanency of this redemption. It is not the redemption that was in Christ. It is the redemption that even now IS in Christ.

Observe, the word *“through” (dia)* makes the ransoming connected with Christ Jesus the means “through” which God acquits sinners; the acquittal comes only through this one channel, no other exists. (Lenski, p.252)

- **Tenth, this God righteousness was made possible by an atoning sacrifice (3:25a)**

“...Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

Here in verse 25 we have another category in terms of which the provision God has made for our justification is viewed.

Redemption contemplates our bondage. Propitiation contemplates our liability to the wrath of God and is the provision of grace whereby we may be freed from that wrath.

“Although the word used here by the apostle occurs only twice in the New Testament and in the other instance (Heb. 9:5) plainly means the mercy-seat, the covering of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place, yet there is good reason for believing that in this case it means ‘propitiatory offering’ and is to be interpreted after the analogy of 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Heb 2:17.

Christ is therefore said to have been a propitiatory sacrifice. More of this shortly.

First, observe that the precise language of the text is to be noted. It is not said here that Christ gave himself a propitiatory sacrifice, though such language would have been in harmony with the teaching of Scripture.

Our attention is drawn to the fact that **God set him forth a propitiatory sacrifice**, and since the person in view is thus distinguished from Christ it is God the Father who is represented as setting him forth (cf. 5:8, 10; 8:3; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 5:18, 19; Eph 4:4-6; Heb 2:10-13).

It is quite alien to biblical thought to overlook the agency of God the Father in the provisions of redemption and it is perversion to represent the Father as won over to grace and mercy by the intervention of Christ's propitiatory accomplishment.

Paul here represents the Father as the One Who took the initiative in this action and as making the provision by which propitiation was wrought." (Murray, p.117-118)

"And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt..."
(Isaiah 53)

Lenski says of this, "God is the actor throughout. This is a vital point. Subject and verb are reversed, which places an emphasis on both, the main emphasis being on the verb which is placed as far forward as possible: '*set forth did God,*' the aorist indicates the historical fact.

While this verb is very common, in the present sacred connection it is undoubtedly a [liturgical & ritualistic] term and is used with reference to things relating to the Jewish Tabernacle and its worship... **In a most sacred and solemn act God '*did set forth for Himself*' (middle voice) Christ Jesus."**

Ponder now the term ...

Propitiation

Summary from *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* by Leon Morris

hilasterion; Strong's #2435

The verb form of *hilaskomai*, "to propitiate", is used twice in the New Testament, namely in the publican's prayer, "O God, be propitiated for me, the sinner (Luke 18:13), and in the statement in Hebrews that Jesus is a High Priest "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (2:17).

The noun form *hilasmos*, "propitiation", is found in the expression "propitiation for our sins" which occurs twice in 1 John (2:2 & 4:10). In our text here (3:25) God is said to have set forth Christ as *hilastarion* through faith "in his blood". The same word occurs in Hebrews 9:5 where in the midst of the description of the Temple it means "the mercy-seat".

Though limited in the number of appearances, the concept remains fundamentally crucial to the all the Gospel, for the very idea of propitiation is often present, though the term is not, in passages that deal with the wrath of God.

Indeed **“so persuasive is this line of reasoning that S.R. Driver can regard propitiation as one of the three main categories used in the New Testament to interpret the death of Christ.”** (Morris, p.144)

The use of “Propitiation” in the Old Testament

Leon Morris, in his book, appropriately discusses the term propitiation by examining the Old Testament teaching on the “wrath of God”.

He says, “The wrath of God is often confused with that irrational passion we so frequently find in man and which was commonly ascribed to heathen deities.” (p.149)

“The fact which we have to face is that in the nature of things there must be an eternal recoil against the unholy on the part of the all-holy God. If we can understand the wrath of God in some such fashion as this there seems no insuperable objection to our thinking of that wrath as a reality to be reckoned with, and to seeing propitiation as the means of averting that wrath from the sinner, who, unless this can be done, finds himself in evil case.” (p.149)

Observe that the wrath of God is “no capricious passion, but the stern reaction of the divine nature towards evil.” (p.150)

Morris asks, “What else are we to make of passages like the following?”

‘Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger against thee... And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity... and ye shall know that I the Lord do smite’ (Ezek 7:8f).

Or *‘The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the intents of His heart’* (Jerem. 23:20).

Or *‘Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is as a devouring fire: and his breath is as an overflowing stream, that reacheth even unto the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity... And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be broken in pieces.’* etc. (Is 30:27-31).

Or *‘O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast broken us down; thou hast been angry: ... Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it; ... Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering’* (Ps.60:1-3).

Indeed it is difficult to image how the prophets and psalmists could possibly have expressed more strongly the personal character of the wrath of God.

And while disaster is regarded as the inevitable result of man's sin, it is not by some inexorable law of an impersonal Nature, but because **a holy God wills to pour out the full cup of His wrath on those who commit sin.**

Indeed, it is largely because wrath is so fully personal in the Old Testament that mercy also becomes so very personal, for mercy is the action of the same God who was angry now allowing His wrath to be turned away. (p.152)

Morris then observes some of the ways in which the wrath of God is averted. (p.153)

- (1) Purging out the sin by destroying an offending city (Deut 13:15-17)
- (2) Slaying those who sinned at Baal-peor (Num 25:4)
- (3) Releasing captives (2 Chron 28:11-13)
- (4) Putting away heathen wives (Ezra 10:14)
- (5) Repentance (Jonah 3:7, 10)
- (6) Humbling of oneself (2 Chron 12:7)
- (7) Through the intercession of one who is righteous (Psa 106:23; Jerem 18:20; Job 42:7)

And beneath all this is a fundamental axiom of God's nature that He is merciful rather than wrathful.

Morris says, "While wrath is a dreadful reality, it must not be taken as the last word about God... A beautiful reminder that God's nature is merciful rather than wrathful comes from Micah: *'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again and have compassion upon us, he will tread our iniquities under foot: and thou wilt cast all their sins in to the depths of the sea'*" (Micah 7:18f).

Fascinating the passages in which God is said to be 'slow to anger':

"The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'" (Exodus 34:6-7)

"They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them." (Nehemiah 9:17)

"But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Psalms 86:15)

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him,” (Joel 2:13)

“An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh. The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.” (Nahum 1:1-3)

Morris says, “In reading them we are apt to fasten our attention on expressions like ‘*slow to anger and plenteous in mercy*’. But we should not overlook the fact that the writers could, in the immediate context, say such things as, the Lord ‘*will by no means clear the guilty*’ (Nu 14:18), or ‘*turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning*’ (Joel 2:12). For those who wrote such words the idea that God is ‘slow to anger’ was not a truism. It was a surprising revelation, something to be received with awe and wonder.” (p.154)

Thus, “the general picture which the Old Testament gives us of God is of One who is by nature merciful, and who cannot be swayed by man’s puny efforts. In the last resort forgiveness is always due to God’s being what He is, and not to anything that man may do.

Because God is God, He must react in the strongest manner to man’s sin, and thus we reach the concept of the divine wrath.

But because God is God, wrath cannot be the last word. *‘The Lord is good; his mercy endureth forever’* (Ps 100:5).” (p.154)

Or as James so wondrously expresses it, *“Mercy triumphs over judgment”* (2:13). Throughout the Old Testament, then, the wrath of God is a thing that pervades the whole of the Old Testament writings.

And above all else, the concept of the wrath of God stresses the eternally serious affront of sin to the Holy God.

The Old Testament does not view sin as just a mere hiccup which a kindly, benevolent God will regard as of no great consequence. On the contrary, the God of the Old Testament is One who loves righteousness (Psa 33:5; 48:10; etc), and whose attitude toward unrighteousness can be described as divine hatred. (Morris, p.174f)

Consider the following rather typical statement from the prophet Zachariah - *‘These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord’* (8:16f)

Such passages reveal the strongest possible repulsion in the face of everything evil.

And yet, it is from the very heart of the God who hates evil that pleadings to return and repent come!

“And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45:22)

“Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, ‘Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!’” (Jeremiah 44:4)

There is in our day a strong revulsion away from any talk of God’s wrath... Rather, the focus and emphasis is on the truth that God is love!

Morris points out, though, that “in view of the fact that both truths are expressed... it seems better to say that divine love and the divine wrath are compatible aspects of the divine nature.” (p.176)

There is a divine wrath, but if we may put it this way, it is always exercised with a certain tenderness. Even when He is angry with man’s sin God loves man and is concerned for his well-being in the fullest sense.

There is a divine love, but it is not a careless sentimentality indifferent to the moral integrity of those He loves. Rather it is a love that is a purifying fire, blazing against everything that hinders the fullest expression of intimate love between Creator and creature.

“Indeed wrath may be thought of as especially wrath against the loved ones for, as J. Fichtner points out, wrath is connected much more often with the covenant name ‘Jehovah’ than with any other of the divine names.” (p.176)

Again, “if we think of an uncontrollable outburst of passion, then we have a pagan conception, completely inapplicable to the God of the Old Testament. But if we think rather of a wrath which is the reverse side of a holy love, a flame which sears but purifies, then we have a conception which is valuable not only for an understanding of the ancient Scriptures, but also for any right conception of the nature of God.” (p.176f)

This divine wrath is no fitful outburst of personal anger. It is the implacable antagonism of holiness for evil, an antagonism that burns eternally! (p.177)

It is against such a background that the Old Testament idea of propitiation is to be studied. Where there is sin, the Old Testament teaches, there is wrath... Yet there may also be forgiveness which necessarily involves the laying aside of wrath.

But, and here fundamental doctrine; the removal of God's wrath is not due to man bringing a sufficient offering or good work that impresses God. No. It is due to God Himself.

Blessed be God forever and ever for the following axiom of fact rooted in the very depth of the Divine heart...

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." (Leviticus 17:11)

Morris [p.177] quotes Forsyth who says here, **"Given! Did you ever see the force of it? 'I have given you the blood to make atonement. This is an institution which I set up for you to comply with, set it up for purposes of My own, on principles of My own, but it is My gift."** (*The Work of Christ*, P. T. Forsyth, London, 1948, p.90)

Now may it never be that we should think this to be some manner of bribe. God forbid! It is not!

It is simply the Divinely Appointed Way of Removing Wrath. It is the Divinely Appointed Way of Propitiation.

Forsyth again, **"Atonement in the Old Testament was not the placating of God's anger, but the sacrament of God's grace.** It was the expression of God's anger on the one hand and the expression and putting in action of God's grace on the other hand... The sacrifices were in themselves prime acts of obedience to God's means of grace and His expressed will." (ibid; Morris p.178)

Conclusion to this examination of the Old Testament...

Divine wrath is inherent to the divine nature, but also, by God's own appointment, this wrath may be turned away. That turning away is properly called "propitiation".

We have thus followed Morris's flow of thought, examining first the terminology and concept of 'wrath' in the Old Testament.

Consider now the teaching of the sacred Scripture on the Wrath of God in the New Testament.

First, observe that while there is not the poetic richness found in the Old, there is nevertheless clear unmistakable teaching on God's wrath in the New.

There are two Greek words particularly used to denote the divine anger. *Thumos* and *Orge*. While in the same broad category of thought, there is clear distinction between them.

Thumos denotes an impassioned explosion or outburst of anger. One that suddenly breaks forth and just as suddenly ceases.

Orge, in distinction, speaks of a more settled emotion with thoughtful deliberation.

Unger's Bible Dictionary describes the two words saying,

“*Thumos* is the more turbulent commotion, the ‘boiling agitation of the feelings, either presently to subside and disappear, or else to settle down into *orge*, wherein is more of an abiding and settled habit of the mind with the purpose of revenge.”

Morris observes, that while the distinction is not always observed, it is nevertheless clear why *orge* is a far more precise term for the divine wrath than *thumos*. In fact, outside of the book of Revelation, *thumos* is used only once to speak of God’s anger.

Observe that the teaching of Jesus does not use either of these terms frequently. And yet, he clearly and explicitly taught,

“That men stand in danger of a hell which may be described as a ‘hell of fire’ (Mt 5:22ff), or as ‘the eternal fire’ (Mt 18:8), a place where *‘their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched’* (Mk 9:48).

God is to be feared, for He, ‘*after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell*’ (Lk 12:3). Jesus’ severe strictures on Capernaum and other cities (Mt. 11:20, 24), and on the Pharisees (Mt 23), show an intolerance of evil.

So, too, is the idea of the ‘*outer darkness*’ where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28).

Tasker, in *The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God* (London, 1951, p36), says, “These are sayings of terrible severity, but they are just as much part of the revelation of God made known in Christ Jesus as those sayings and deeds of the Master which so conspicuously display the divine love and mercy. To thrust these severe sayings on one side and to concentrate attention solely upon passages of the Gospels where the divine Fatherhood is proclaimed is to preach a debilitated Christianity, which does not and cannot do what Christ came into the world to do, viz. save men from the wrath to come.”

Clearly for Christ, the divine reaction of wrath in the face of evil was a solemn and terrible reality.

Morris quotes H. Wheeler Robinson, in *Redemption and Revelation* (London, 1942, p.269), “This wrath of God is not the blind and automatic working of abstract law – always a fiction, since ‘law’ is a conception, not an entity, till it finds expression through its instruments. **The wrath of God is the wrath of divine Personality.**”

The use of “Propitiation” in the New Testament

The noun form – *hilasterion*

“We meet the verb *hilaskomai* ‘to propitiate’ twice in the New Testament, namely in the prayer of the publican ‘*O God, be propitiated for me, the sinner*’ (Luke 18:13), and in the statement in Hebrews that Jesus was a High Priest ‘*to make propitiation for the sins of the people*’ (Heb 2:17). The non *hilasmos*, ‘propitiation’, is found in the expression ‘*propitiation for our sins*’ which occurs twice in the First Epistle of St. John (1 John 2:2; 4:10), while in

Romans 3:25 God is said to have set forth Christ as *hilasterion* through faith ‘in his blood’, and the same word occurs in Hebrews 9:5 where it means ‘the mercy-seat.’ (Morris, p.144)

The Hebrew term for the mercy seat is *kapporeth* (3727), which means “cover” or “lid”.

“And you shall make a mercy seat [*kapporeth*] of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide.” (Ex 25:17)

Another form of the noun is *kippur* (3725), which means atonement. Thus *yom kippur* is the Day of Atonement.

Morris has a fascinating footnote on p.184f in which the *kapporeth* is discussed. “That it was more than merely a lid to the ark seems implied by the reference to the holy of holies in 1 Chron 28:11 as ‘the house of the *kapporeth*’ and the designation of Yahweh as ‘thou that sittest upon the cherubim’ (Ps 80:1). The *kapporeth* clearly had existence in its own right, and was very closely associated with the presence of Yahweh.”

So the same word is used in Romans 3 & Hebrews 9. Clearly it refers to the mercy seat in Hebrews, in the discussion of the tabernacle. The question is ‘does it therefore refer to the same in the discussion of the wrath of God on sinners in Romans 3?’

No. Not precisely. Morris is correct in his paragraph on p. 195, “The epistle to the Romans does not move in the sphere of Levitical symbolism, and a reference to the *kapporeth* here would be out of character. It is not so much that there is objection to an idea appearing once only, for we have such phenomena elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., the Rock in 1 Cor 10:4, and the Brazen Serpent in John 3:14). It is rather that a reference to the *kapporeth* here would be like a geological erratic – something for which the context gives us no preparation, and which is not followed up in any way. It is difficult to imagine that Paul would take one solitary Levitical concept, and use it once with no explanation or hint that he was referring to an object of Temple furniture. Such a procedure might be intelligible to Hebrews, but seems quite out of place in Romans.”

Thus Morris concludes, p. 198, “While this examination of the evidence shows that it is difficult to give a final proof either way, yet it is contended that the balance of probability is strongly in the direction of seeing the *hilasterion* in Romans 3 a general reference to the removal of the wrath of God, rather than a specific reference either to the mercy-seat, or to the Day of Atonement ceremonies.”

Another question about *hilasterion* in Romans 3 is where we should understand it in terms of propitiation or expiation.

Observe first, the truth of what Morris says, p.199, “It is not always realized that this first mention of justification by faith leads immediately in logical sequence to the thought of God’s wrath [vs. 18]... Indeed the entire weight of verses 16 & 17, which contain a summary of the Epistle, rests upon the assumption that all men are, apart from the Gospel, under the anger of God. Salvation for Paul is essentially a salvation from as well as a salvation unto.”

Ponder the title of R.C. Sprouls excellent book, *Saved from What?*

Thus, the entire flow of thought from 1:18 on, is to demonstrate the just judgment, and hence wrath of God on sin and sinners. Indeed, the full development of damnation of all Pagans, the damnation of all Moralists and the damnation of all Jews leaves no doubt “to the apostle’s burning conviction that the wrath of God is a terrible reality, and that the evil-doer has a frightful prospect before him.”

Paul then is able to wrap all up in the summary litany of sins lists in 3:9-18, closing with a statement as to the purpose of the law, “that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God.”

It is within this context of the condemnation of all men and resultant wrath of God that Paul brings forth verse 21 of chapter 3.

But now, quite apart from the law, there is a God-righteousness revealed. It is a God-righteousness which enables God to pronounce the sinner justified. It is a God-righteousness made possible by the work of Christ “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood.”

The context here demands that propitiation mean that somehow, the divine wrath of God Almighty has been turned aside; averted.

It is here that two concepts arise:

- (1) What should be the precise translation of *hilasterion*: “expiation” or “propitiation”?
- (2) Meditate on the eternally praised willingness of God to allow a substitute!

First the translation of *hilasterion*

The English word “**Expiation**” comes from the Latin *expiatio*, “to atone”, from *pius*, “mild, pious”; primary sense “to appease, pacify, perform some act which is supposed to purify the person guilty or is accepted by the offended part as satisfaction for the injury.

Expiation deals in “sub-personal categories” such as facts, acts or things (see footnote p201). Morris says, “As commonly used the term seems to signify the removal of sin or guilt, but neither of these is a thing which can be objectively removed. Expiation can be given an intelligible meaning only when we move into the realm of personal relations” (p.211)

The English word “**Propitiation**” comes from the Latin *propitiare*; the root word *pio* meaning, “pity”. Propitiation results in conciliation, appeasement & restoration. Whereas expiate focuses only on facts, acts or things, the term propitiate focuses on the person propitiated. In other words, propitiation focuses on personal categories. Propitiation focuses upon the One offended; Almighty God.

There are those who stumble over this foundational fulcrum point of Redemption. The idea of a bloody propitiatory sacrifice in which life pours out to secure release of prisoners, salvation of sinners, is abhorrent to modern man in his refusal to accept the Biblical categories of sin, death and divine wrath.

And yet, as abhorrent as child sacrifice is and was throughout ancient Biblical history, as abominable as it was pronounced by God on the nations dispossessed from the promised land, yet it was this very thing that God first commanded Abraham to do and then stayed Abraham's hand from.

With bated breath we watch, in Genesis 22, as Isaac carries the load of wood up the mount on which he will be sacrificed by his own father. With relief, we hear the angel of the LORD stop Abraham from this abominable act.

With wonder we perceive how the LORD Himself provided the ram. In our heart we ponder the meaning of 22:14, *"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah Jireh [The LORD will provide], as it is said to this day, 'In the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.'"*

As distasteful, repugnant and abominable as child sacrifice was and is, let it burn into our souls the reality that it was through this very thing that the Triune God secured the eternal salvation of sinners like you and me.

"This man delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross..." (Acts 2:23)

"The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.... The LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief..." (Isa 53)

Morris quotes Simpson in the footnote on p.211, "All that we can now say is that, when it is the Eternal Son who offers Himself without spot to the Eternal Father, the ethical objection to a propitiatory sacrifice vanishes" (*What is the Gospel?* London, 1914, p.192).

Second, ponder the concept of substitute blood

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." (Lev 17:11)

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (Hebrews 9:22)

The eternal axioms are as follows:

God's holiness demands wrath and thus death on sinners.

The sinner's death means a loss of life.

The life is in the blood.

Therefore, the sinner's blood must be spilled.

But... the blood of a substitute will be accepted...

That provision, which this Biblical concept of propitiation is built upon, is the concept of substitution.

In both the Old and New Testaments the means of propitiation is the offering up of a life yielded to death and hence its blood being poured out; and this accepted offering was appointed, set in place by God Himself.

It was mercy that God allowed the spilled blood of a mere beast, a lamb, to take the place of the man made in God's image who had rebelled against his Maker.

Here is not an equal exchange. Here is a dumb animal, not made in God's image, nor capable of either sin or obedience. It has done nothing to incense the wrath of its Creator. And God allows the blood of this mere beast to be an accepted substitute for the blood of the sinner offering it!

The man should have died. Not the lamb. The man's blood should have been spilled, not that of the lamb!

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ that His heart, His nature, was and eternally is willing to accept a substitute!

Morris concludes the chapter (p.213),

“The Scripture is clear that the wrath of God is visited upon sinners or else tht the Son of God dies for them. Either sinners are punished for their misdoings or else there takes place what Hodgson calls ‘that self-punishment which combines the activities of punishing and forgiving’. Either we die or He dies. But “*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Rom 5:8).

JUSTIFICATION

Observe the contrast in frequency of occurrence between the N.T. words relating to the Atonement of Christ. *Propitiation* is used only four times in all the N.T. *Reconciliation* occurs in only five passages. What of “*justification*”?

“By contrast, he who would expound justification is confronted with eighty-one occurrences of the adjective *dikaiaias*, ninety-two of the noun *dikaiousuna*, two of the noun *dikaiosis*, thirty-nine of the verb *dikaiao*, ten of the noun *dikaioima*, and five of the adverb *dikaios*.

The sheer frequency of the usage of this term in it's varied forms, testifies strongly that we are dealing with a concept of tremendous importance for the understanding of the Atonement and it's application to the sinner.

The root meaning of the term is that of “justness” or “rightness”. This concept is not of something arbitrary, but of something that conforms to some standard of right.

“The righteous man is one who is adjudged right by such a standard, and righteousness indicates a state of having attained to the standard in question.” (*The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, Leon Morris, p.252)

Law and Judgment in the Old Testament.

“The thoughts of righteousness, justification and the rest are inextricably bound up with other concepts like those of judgment, pleading in the law court, and, especially, law itself. Even in a short treatment it is necessary to take some notice of this, for it has the effect of putting justification in its context. Justification is not an isolated concept. It is part of a whole way of viewing God and the world which sees in law a means of understanding the divine ordering of things. To the men of the Old Testament God was a God of law, and a very great deal in their religion cannot be understood if this is lost sight of.” (Morris, p.253)

“The holy Law is not the creation of God but His nature.”

(*The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought: A Theological Symposium*, London, P.T. Forsyth, 1903, p.79)

Law, is a category for the understanding of God’s ways

Consider Abraham’s question, “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” (Gen 18:25)

Here God was designated by the legal term, ‘Judge’. His relationship to the mankind described in legal categories. Abraham’s question gives expression to his certainty that God as Judge, would act in accordance with moral law. Abraham was confident of this.

In like manner, Jeremiah would say, “*Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep the time of their coming, but my people know not the rules of the LORD.*” (Jeremiah 8:7 ESV; “*judgment of the LORD*” KJV)

Judgment, rules, law are as natural to the LORD as the movement and instincts of the birds are to them.

Judgment and Justification are often connected in Scripture.

“*Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.*” (Psalm 143:2)

“*If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.*” (Deut 25:1)

Observe that justification is part of the whole process of judgment. In this passage, it is the declaration in favour of a party to a law-suit.

Many like passages clearly establish that righteousness or justification is in the Old Testament woven together with legal conceptions.

Old Testament Terms

Torah (#8451)

The basic idea is 'law', and one that is closely associated with Yahweh.

Shaphat (#8199)

The overwhelming usage of this term points to the understanding that Yahweh has a deep interest in law. God makes '*a statute for the rain*' (Job 28:26). He made an '*everlasting statute*' governing the limits of the sea (Jeremiah 5:22). "Law is thus not simply a demand that God makes on His people: it is the way in which He administers His universe. He can be relied to act according to law." (Morris, p255)

Mishpat (#4941)

This word is connected with Yahweh about 180 times, often in the sense of 'laws'. "It may be used more generally, sometimes linked with the righteousness words, e.g. 'Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God; thy judgments are a great deep' (Ps.36:6); 'I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord' (Je. 9:24). Here judgment and righteousness seem to be part of the essential nature of the Lord." (Morris, p.255)

The Old Testament consistently thinks of a God who works by the method of law. This is not the conception of one or two writers but is found everywhere.

***DIKAIOS* in the SEPTUAGINT**

Dikaios is the translation the LXX gave *Tsedeq* (#6664); the English translates it as "Righteousness" or "Justification".

The basic meaning of this Hebrew root is the idea of 'straightness'.

"*Tsedeq*, with its kindred words, signifies that standard which God maintains in this world. It is the norm by which all must be judged. What this norm is, depends entirely upon the Nature of God.' If this is so, then the idea of righteousness is conformity to God's standard, and justification will be a process in which this conformity is either attained, or declared to be attained." (Morris , p259)

The concept is a forensic meaning; a declaration or acquittal. The meaning is to declare righteous rather than to make righteous.

“That a declaratory process rather than a making righteous is meant is clear from the fact that the verb is applied to Jehovah (Ps. 51:4), for it is an impossible thought that He should be ‘made righteous’ in any sense other than ‘made righteous before men’ or ‘declared righteous’.” (ibid. p.260)

“Finally, let us notice the important words of the psalmist: ‘enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified’ (Ps. 143:2). Here we are face to face with the ultimate question in religion, and the conclusion is that it is impossible for any man to have confidence in his standing before God on the ground of his deeds.” (ibid. p.260)

The righteousness of men

When applied to mankind, the word righteousness reveals an essentially forensic significance. [Forensic = “legal proceedings”]

“The righteous are those acquitted at the bar of God’s justice, and righteousness is the standing of those so acquitted.” (ibid. p.260)

“Thus J. Skinner explains his view that in the Old Testament ‘the forensic element preponderates’ in the idea of righteousness by saying: ‘what is meant is that questions of right and wrong were habitually regarded from a legal point of view as matters to be settled by a judge, and that this point of view is emphasized in the words derived from *tsdq*. This, indeed, is characteristic of the Heb. Conception of righteousness in all its developments: whether it be a moral quality or a religious status, it is apt to be looked on as in itself controvertible and incomplete until it has been confirmed by what is equivalent to a judicial sentence.’ The Hebrew concept is not grasped by making a facile equation with the Greek *dikaïosuna* or the English ‘righteousness’; it is not an ethical term, but a religious. It takes its origin in the forensic sphere and makes its home in the law of God.” (Morris, p.260-261)

Consider Isaiah 5:23 which pronounces a woe on those who “*take away the righteousness of the righteous from him.*” Clearly a forensic and not a moral understanding is in view here.

The book of Job uses the words in a forensic manner often.

“Behold I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right” (Job 13:18)

“Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?” (Job 40:8)

“But how can a man be in the right before God?” (Job 9:2)

In each passage the thing in view is one’s standing with the LORD. Furthermore, the implication is that man is completely unable on his own, of coming to that right or just standing.

The righteousness of God

The O.T. consistently depicts Jehovah as a just or righteous God.

“The heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is Judge.” (Psalm 50:6)

“...before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.” (Psalms 96:13)

“But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.” (Isaiah 5:16)

The O.T. abounds, both implicitly and explicitly, with the idea that God as the righteous Judge demands right living on the part of men. He has placed His law before us and expects us to walk in it.

Micah 6:8 & Deut 6

JUSTIFICATION in the NEW TESTAMENT

Justification is God’s declaration that we are legally righteous (straight) in His sight. The righteous man is the one who is accepted before God. He is pronounced in conformity with the standard.

“Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.” (Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem, p.723)

Justification “refers to the declaration of God to a repentant sinner that all his sins are forgiven, he is acquitted, the wrath of the judge is removed and he stands righteous before God. God announces that something has been taken away and something has been added. Sins have been taken away. And a new righteousness has been given.” (John Piper in sermon entitled, “Those He Called He Also Justified”; October 27, 1985)

Old Testament Foundations

“In the Scriptures ‘righteousness’ does not have exactly the same meaning as it has come to have in western civilization of the twentieth century, or that it had in profane Greek of the first.” (The Apostolic Preaching of the Gospel, Leon Morris, p.269)

“It may be true that, ultimately, the Christian comes to practice what is involved in the Greek understanding of *dikaosuna*, but his starting-point is the Hebrew idea. The New Testament can scarcely be understood until that is realized.” (ibid., p270)

Justification involves a forensic/legal declaration by God

This idea of a legal declaration is very strong in Romans 8:33-34 where justification is contrasted with condemnation. *“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?”*

To condemn is to make a pronouncement. The opposite of such negative pronouncement is justification, which, in this passage, has the idea of declaring someone not guilty.

Consider Deuteronomy 25:1, *“If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked...”*

Clearly what is not meant here, by ‘justify’, is that the judges are making someone good internally. Such is not the work of judges.

Consider Proverb 17:15, *“He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.”*

Here the idea of a legal declaration is very clear.

Reformed theologian John Murray makes a key point on this issue

“Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgment of God with respect to us. The distinction is like that of the distinction between the act of a surgeon and the act of a judge. The surgeon, when he removes an inward cancer, does something in us. That is not what a judge does – he gives a verdict regarding our judicial status. If we are innocent he declares accordingly... The purity of the gospel is bound up with the recognition of this distinction. If justification is confused with regeneration or sanctification, then the door is opened for the perversion of the gospel at its center. Justification is still the article of the standing or falling of the Church.” (Redemption Accomplished and Applied, John Murray, p.121)

“It is important to emphasize that this legal declaration in itself does not change our internal nature or character at all. In this sense of ‘justify,’ God issues a legal declaration about us. This is why theologians have also said that justification is forensic, where the word forensic means ‘having to do with legal proceedings.’” (Grudem, p.724)

Justification means the Imputation of our Sins to Christ

[The following from The Passion of Jesus Christ, John Piper, Ch.10]

“We have now been justified by his blood” (Romans 5:9)

“[We] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 3:24)

“We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” (Romans 3:28)

Being justified before God and being forgiven by God are not the identical

“To be justified in a courtroom is not the same as being forgiven. Being forgiven implies that I am guilty and my crime is not counted. Being justified implies that I have been tried and found innocent. My claim is just. I am vindicated. The judge says, ‘Not guilty.’”

Justifying is a legal act

“It means declaring someone to be just. It is a verdict. The verdict of justification does not make a person just. It declares a person just. It is based on someone actually being just. We can see this most clearly when the Bible tells us that, in response to Jesus’ teaching, the people ‘justified’ God (Luke 7:29). This does not mean they made God just (since he already was). It means they declared God to be just.”

The moral change we undergo when we trust Christ is not justification.

“The bible usually calls that sanctification – the process of becoming good. Justification is not that process. It is not a process at all. It is a declaration that happens in a moment. A verdict: Just! Righteous!”

“The ordinary way to be justified in a human court is to keep the law. In that case the jury and the judge simply declare what is true of you: You kept the law. They justify you. But in the courtroom of God, we have not kept the law. Therefore, justification, on ordinary terms, is hopeless. The Bible even says, ‘He who justifies the wicked [is] an abomination to the LORD’ (Proverbs 17:15). And yet, amazingly, because of Christ, it also says God ‘justifies the ungodly’ who trust in his grace (Romans 4:5). God does what looks abominable.

Why is God’s justification of us not abominable?

“As the Bible puts it, how can God ‘be just and the justifier of the one who [simply!] has faith in Jesus’ (Romans 3:26)? It is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly who trust him, for two reasons.

One is that Christ shed his blood to cancel the guilt of our crime. So it says, ‘We have now been justified by his blood’ (Romans 5:9). But that is only the removal of guilt. That does not declare us righteous. Canceling our failures to keep the law is not the same as declaring us to be a law-keeper.

When a teacher cancels from the record an exam that got an F, it’s not the same as declaring it an A. If the bank were to forgive me the debts on my account, that would not be the same as declaring me rich. The cancellation must happen. That is essential to justification. But there

is more. There is another reason why it is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly by faith.”

Justification means the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness to us

[The following from The Passion of Jesus Christ, John Piper, Ch.11]

“Being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8)

“For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

“...not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.” (Philippians 3:9)

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness...” (Isaiah 61:10)

“Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” (Zechariah 3:3-4)

Justification is not merely the cancellation of my unrighteousness. It is also the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to me

I do not have a righteousness that commends me to God. My claim before God is that named by Paul in Philippians 3:9

“This is Christ’s righteousness. It is imputed to me. That means Christ fulfilled all righteousness perfectly; and then that righteousness was reckoned to be mine, when I trusted in him. I was counted righteous. God looked on Christ’s perfect righteousness, and he declared me to be righteous with the righteousness of Christ.

So there are two reasons why it is not abominable for God to justify the ungodly (Romans 4:5).

First, the death of Christ paid the debt of our unrighteousness. Second, the obedience of Christ provided the righteousness we needed to be justified in God’s court. The demands of God for entrance into eternal life are not merely that our unrighteousness be canceled, but that our perfect righteousness be established.

The suffering and death of Christ is the basis of both. His suffering is the suffering that our unrighteousness deserved. *'He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities'* (Isaiah 53:5).

But his suffering and death were also the climax and completion of the obedience that became the basis of our justification. He was *'obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross'* (Philippians 2:8). His death was the pinnacle of his obedience."

This may well be what the Bible refers to when it says, *"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:17)

Therefore, Christ's death became the basis of our pardon and our perfection. *'For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

What does it mean that God made the sinless Christ to be sin? It means our sin was imputed to him, and thus he became our pardon.

And what does it mean that we (who are sinners) become the righteousness of God in Christ? It means, similarly, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and thus he became our perfection.

"May Christ be honored for his whole achievement in suffering and dying, both the work of pardoning our sin, and the work of providing our righteousness. Let us admire him and treasure him and trust him for this great achievement."

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." (3:21-25a)

Amidst the context of mankind's ruin, sin & damnation a God-righteousness, made available to mankind, is manifested that is utterly apart from any merit, good works or law keeping, although it was, in shadowy terms, described throughout the Old Testament.

And the wonder of this God-righteousness is that it is received by penitent trust in Jesus Christ; a Godly sorrow that results in a turning or conversion out of a child-like trust. The Scripture calls this faith.

The further wonder of this is that there are no distinctions made in God's eyes amongst mankind. For all are under the same judgment of damnation and hence are gratuitously offered the declaration of "justified" on the basis of the heart of Grace that is in God.

The fearful part of this is that which was done to achieve this ability on God's part to justify sinners. There was a redemption price paid by God the Son, Whom God the Father set forth for Himself as a blood sacrifice, a propitiatory or wrath turning away sacrifice. Thus, by pouring out the divine wrath from the Father upon the Son, justice was served as God the Son experienced the essence of hell; separation from His God and Father.

And all this is to be embraced and received by faith; penitent trust.

"This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (3:25b – 26)

Observe again Romans 3:21-26

- **To understand Grace, one must understand Law.** To understand Mercy one must understand Wrath. To understand salvation one must understand damnation.

The Messiah's ministry is prefaced by John the Baptist's call for repentance.

The good news of Romans 3:21, to the end of the epistle, necessarily follows the description of God's wrath in 1:18 – 3:20!

Consider what Paul spoke to Felix about in Acts 24:24-25... *righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come...*

Consider the implication of Christ's words to Simon the Pharisee, *But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little...* (Luke 7:39ff)

- **Righteousness** – *It is a God-righteousness, not a man-righteousness offered in the Gospel.*

Listen to Paul when he says, *That I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.* (Phil 3:9)

- **Propitiation** – *A blood sacrifice that satisfies Divine wrath.* 1 John 2:2 says, *Jesus Christ the righteous, and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...*
- **Justification** – *A legal or forensic declaration by God that the sinner is "just" in relationship to God's Law*

“In this marvelous operation of God the infinitely Holy Judge judicially declares righteous the one who believes in Jesus. A justified believer emerges from God’s great court room with a consciousness that another, his Substitute, has borne his guilt, and that he stands without accusation before the bar of God (Rom 8:1, 33, 34). Justification makes no one righteous, neither is it the bestowment of righteousness as such but rather declares one to be justified whom God sees as perfected once and forever in His Beloved Son.” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 624)

- **The problem? The righteousness of God Himself was in question (3:25)**

In His forbearance, God had passed over sin, from Adam to the present day, thus failing, it would seem, to manifest Divine wrath on sin.

Divine forbearance: The good & the bad of it... there will be a reckoning...

- **Thus, God desired to demonstrate His personal righteousness as a God of justness and as a God Who justifies sinners! (3:26)**

In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil (Proverbs 16:6)

Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed. (Psalms 85:10)

The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17)

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before Thee. (Psalm 89:14)

All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant. (Psalm 25:10)

In wrath remember mercy! (Habakkuk 3:2)

Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)

To demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)

Romans 4 Abraham: Justified by faith

*"1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?
2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.
3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."
4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.
5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness..." (4:1-5)*

In 3:21, Paul says that this God-righteousness is *"witnessed by the Law and the Prophets"*. To this evidence Paul now turns and devotes the entire chapter to.

Observe that already in 1:16-17, the initial statement of this epistle's theme, Paul cited Habakkuk 2:4 as voicing the God-ordained theme that *"the just shall live by faith!"*

But now rather than listing a litany of passages on this topic, as he did on the topic of sin, see 3:9ff, Paul does something far more important.

He considers the case of Abraham with whom God's covenantal promises were first given. So important a personage is this Abraham who dominates the whole of the Old Testament, that God even names Himself *"the God of Abraham!"*

Ponder the significance of this in light of Hebrews 11

*"By faith Abraham obeyed... 13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore **God is not ashamed to be called their God...**" (11:8-16)*

Do we make Him proud? Or do we bring Him shame? We each know...

So, it is Abraham that dominates the whole Old Testament standing as "the father of believers". He is THE Old Testament example of justification by faith alone.

But He is also far more. He was justified while he was as yet uncircumcised thus becoming the father of all Gentile believers. It was after this that he received circumcision as the seal of justification thereby becoming the father of all Jewish believers.

In both capacities he stands for all time as the father of many nations (ethnos) through the Seed, our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Indeed, Abraham puts the whole Old Testament and every utterance, in regard to justification by faith, into the right light. Place this chapter on Abraham alongside John 8:33-59 where Jesus debated the Jews regarding Abraham, and you can see why Paul presents Abraham as the supreme Old Testament witness to justification by faith alone.

But at first glance, and in view of James 2:17-26, Abraham does not seem to serve this purpose. For in James we read that Abraham was justified not by faith alone but also by (ek) works.

*“14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 **So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** 18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?** 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” – and he was called a friend of God. 24 **You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.** 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”*

Now juxtapose this with Romans 4:1-2...

“1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.”

Observe, the close follow-up, by Paul, to his rhetorical question in 3:27,

“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

The grand doctrine of Justification by faith alone in which a God-righteousness is wrapped around us leaves the newly clothed in salvation garments sinner without boasting of any kind!

Paul's question on Abraham here further establishes this, *"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God."*

If, Abraham was justified by or out of works, then he would have something to boast about that he had done! Verse 4 establishes the clear principle that wages are what is due and come as the result of works.

But if all our work righteousness is as filthy rags, and if *"every mouth is stopped"* because *"by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight"*, then Abraham could not have been justified by works.

As the Scripture says, *"And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."* (Genesis 15:5-6)

How then do we harmonize Paul and James? Is harmonization possible?

Consider Paul's words in Ephesians 2:8-10...

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Observe the sequential steps:

(1st) **Grace comes first in this gift of salvation!** God's initiative and move comes first offering salvation, not on the basis of works, but as a gift, to sinful mankind. *"But God demonstrates His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly!"* (Romans 5)

(2nd) **Faith comes as the reception of this grace from God's gift of salvation!** Faith is the required conditional response in man to this offer of Grace! As Paul said to the men of Athens, *"God now commands all people everywhere to repent!"* Repentance is the flip side of faith.

(3rd) **Saving faith is a faith that is obedient, walking in God ordained and beforehand prepared good works!** Saving faith invariably produces good works. But these good works are not so that it will be saved, but because it is already saved! Saving faith is a faith which will manifest itself in good works.

The obedience of good works do indeed have a place in our salvation. As Luther rightly said, "Good works do not precede salvation, but they follow it." This is true fundamentally because...

Faith is an Act but Not a Work

Faith means to penitently trust in Jesus Christ. It is coming to Him. It is casting all your cares on Him.

The old acrostic – Forsaking All I Trust Him, is theologically doctrinally accurate.

We all know the old Greek acrostic for fish: (*icthys*). John Gerstner suggests a new acrostic on the Greek word for faith (*pistis*):

Polluted I Surrender To Jesus Savior.

And no text of Holy Scripture tells it quite as well as Romans 4:5: "*To the man who does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*"

Notice the seven ways this one verse, Romans 4:5, teaches justification by faith alone:

1. The justified one does "not work."
2. The justified one "trusts."
3. The justified one trusts not in himself but in another: "God."
4. The justified one confesses himself to be "wicked."
5. The justified one does not have faith in his faith.
6. The justified one sees his faith only as "credited" to him.
7. The justified one sees his faith credited as "righteousness."

Truly the hymn does not exaggerate when it says,

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

*Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.*

Nothing in my hand I bring,

*Simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.*

Now the point here is to understand that there is a God-ordained sequence:

Grace comes first.

God comes first. God has planned from eternity past all Redemption's plan.

Faith comes in response to God's gift.

Faith comes in response to God's **gift**. Faith is man's required response to the God initiated gift offer of salvation. The sovereignly ordained response by man is faith. Faith is to simply, as a child, place all of one's self in His hands, at the foot of the cross. Faith fundamentally is penitent trust.

Faith is the sinner in his own rowboat, a rowboat called self-righteousness, just seconds before plummeting over the edge of Niagra Falls, and the God-man, on the shore, casts the rope of salvation, landing it across the boat.

The hopeless & doomed sinner, has one of two choices. He can trust in his own stuff, his own boat, his own self-righteousness, or he can grab that rope with all he has and fling himself out of his boat of self-righteousness, in utter trust upon the power and goodwill of the Saviour holding the other end of the rope.

Faith responds to God's offered gift of grace.

Good works follow and flow out of saving faith.

Good works are the result of saving faith.

Now observe,

Paul's line of reasoning in Romans 4 is that Abraham was justified by God, on the basis of faith in God, long before the seal of circumcision was given.

Chronologically, Paul is arguing out of Genesis 15 when God brought him outside the tent and said, *"Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them... so shall your offspring be. And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness."* (Gen 15:5-6)

Circumcision would not be given Abraham until Genesis 17, when God gave the promise that one year later, she would bear a son.

Isaac is not born until Genesis 21. It is then not until Genesis 22 that God commands Abraham, *"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."* (Gen 22:2)

When James cites Abraham saying, *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar... You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone"*, James is referencing Genesis 22.

Paul's reasoning that Abraham was justified on the basis of faith alone (Romans 4) is out of Genesis 15.

James' reasoning that Abraham was justified by works (James 2) is out of Genesis 22.

They are referencing two different faith events in Abraham's life; two differing responses required by Abraham. The first was faith and faith alone. The second was no less one of faith but now involved the additional act of obedience; doing what God had commanded.

Now, did God wait until Abraham had proved his faith by sacrificing Isaac to declare Abraham justified? No, Paul says. In Genesis 15, God said, look up. So shall your descendants be. Abraham looked and believed. He had done nothing. He had performed no work, no good deed, no act of obedience. He simply believed. He trusted God completely. And God reckoned it to him as righteousness.

But, what if, in Genesis 22, upon hearing the command of God, Abraham had chosen to ignore it or flat disobey it? What would this "work", this "deed", declare about his alleged profession of faith?

James' whole point is that when the faith that God justifies encounters a command of God, requiring obedience, such a saving faith will show itself in good works; in obedience.

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2:14-17)

Saving faith will, by of its very nature, produce the good works of clothing, feeding and sheltering the one in need.

Saving faith will, because of its very nature, when commanded to do the unthinkable, it will offer its son in sacrifice. Saving faith will say, “to hear is to obey.”

Saving faith will, upon hearing the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, will respond in faith, and upon learning of Christ’s example & command to be baptized, will the same day if possible reveal itself in obedience. As MacArthur says, “Baptism is the first and easiest act of obedience.”

But what if the one professing faith says, “No” at baptism or at any other clearly understood command of God? Friends, we are not saved by our works, but our works do reveal to us our salvation.

The book of James, then, is an assault of spurious faith

Evidently there were some in the very early church who flirted with the notion that faith could be some kind of static, inert, inanimate assent to facts. The book of James, probably the earliest New Testament epistle, specifically confronts this error.

James sounds almost as if he were writing to the 20th century. He says people *can* be deluded into thinking they believe when in fact they do not, and he says the single factor that distinguishes counterfeit faith from the real thing is the righteous behavior inevitably produced in those who have authentic faith.

Is it enough to know and understand and assent to the facts of the gospel – even holding the "*inward conviction*" that these truths apply to me personally – and yet *never* shun sin or submit to the Lord Jesus?

Is a person who holds that kind of belief guaranteed eternal life? Does such a hope constitute faith in the sense Scripture uses the term?

James clearly teaches that it does not. Real faith will produce righteous behavior. And the true character of saving faith may be examined in light of the believer's works. Did not Jesus say, “You will know a tree by its fruit”?

Ponder that this resonates with all of Old Testament and New Testament soteriology. One enters into salvation by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). Faith is by nature turned toward, inclined toward, obedience (Acts 5:32; Rom 1:5, 2:8, 16:26), so good works are inevitable in the life of one who truly believes.

These works have no part in bringing about salvation (Eph 2:9; Rom 3:20, 24; 4:5; Titus 3:5), but they do show the presence of salvation (Eph 2:10; 5:9; 1 John 2:5).

Put another way, "faith is always *obedient* faith. Salvation by faith does not negate the necessity and importance of works. Rather it calls for good works as a consequence of faith." Works, then, distinguish true faith from counterfeit varieties.

Said another way, there is nominal faith and real faith. There is intellectual faith and heart faith. There is sensual faith and there is spiritual faith. There is dead faith and there is vital faith. There is traditional faith which may fall short of transforming personal faith. There is a faith that may be commended as orthodox and yet have no more saving value than the faith of demons.

James attacks all brands of "faith" that fall short of the biblical standard. What MacArthur and others have sometimes termed "mental assent," James characterizes as mere hearing, empty profession, demonic orthodoxy, and dead faith.

Some additional thoughts through the fourth chapter:

1. "It was counted to him as righteousness"

Counted? **Reckoned.** In this legal transaction, "something is transferred to the subject in question and reckoned as his, which he in his own person does not have... it is accounted to the person *per substitutionem*; the object present (faith) takes the place of what it counts for (righteousness), it is substituted for it." (Lenski, p.289)

This expression, involving the term *logizomai*, is the technical one for God's declaring a person righteous. When Abraham believed he was in his own person no more righteous than he was before he believed, but God counted his faith as righteousness for him.

God's accounting did not make him righteous, it did not change Abraham, it changed his status with God. Although he was not righteous, God counted him as righteous nevertheless.

Faith is not righteousness, it is counted or reckoned as being righteousness. The believer really and in himself is never righteous, he is righteous only in God's accounting.

What is there in his faith that God can account for righteousness to the believer? No virtue or merit of either the believer or of his faith, nothing of this sort to the end of his life; something else entirely, the contents of his faith, Christ, his ransom, his merit.

It is the faith that holds these that God counts for righteousness and no other faith. The substitution takes place right here. Christ's merit and righteousness is his own, God counts it as though it were the believer's. Faith only lays its hand upon it, God himself moves it to do so. Then by grace and altogether gratuitously God reckons faith with its content as righteousness for the one who believes.

Lenski says, "Ever and ever God's verdict is only a reckoning, a setting down to the man's credit what he has not earned by working, what another has earned for him, and what this man has been moved to receive by faith. This answers the question as to how God can reckon his faith for righteousness. We must note the Biblical conception of faith:

It is the hand and the heart filled with Christ. It is not mere believing but the possession of Christ. State it thus: God reckons the possession of Christ by faith for righteousness. This helps to show why the Scriptures rate faith so highly: **it is not because of faith as an act but because of the contents of God-wrought faith.**

2. Paul references what David says as being in harmony with this doctrine.

"Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." (4:6-8)

The Hebrew *ashre* is exclamatory: "Oh, the blessedness of!" This is spiritual wellbeing: "Oh, how in every way things are spiritually well with" the man here described.

3. The great fact Paul argues here in chapter 4 is that Abraham was justified by faith long before he was circumcised. His faith alone resulted in justification. This towers above all else.

And this is vital for us today; we who are true children of the father of believers although we are not of his physical blood and are without the rite which he and those of his blood received during the time of the old covenant.

4. Observe the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* here taught.

"Who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." (vs.17)

5. Observe the life lesson of giving God glory versus anxious distrust.

"No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God." (vs.20) Abraham practiced the wise counsel of Philippians 4:6-10.

6. Observe here the Doctrine of Double Imputation

Through and at the Cross our sins imputed by God to Christ.

Through Christ's Resurrection His Righteousness imputed by God to us.

"It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:25)

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Romans 5:1-11 Saved from Wrath

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. 6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:1-11)

Consider Chapters 5, 6, 7 & 8 as a whole.

These chapters describe the blessed effects of God’s righteousness through faith, and throughout these effects are described in *connection with their cause, Jesus Christ, the substance of our faith.*

Consider how frequently is mentioned the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1:4)

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:7)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (5:1)

“More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (5:11)

“So that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (5:21)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (6:23)

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin." (7:25)

"Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (8:39)

When Paul announced his great theme: *"The Righteousness of God from faith to faith"* (in 1:17), he added from Habakkuk: *"And the just shall live by faith."*

From 3:21 to the end of chapter 4, Paul describes and illustrates this faith and its righteousness. Now in chapters 5 thru 8, he describes the life that results from it.

Lenski says, "He who by grace is led through the golden portal of faith, God's declaration of righteousness descending upon him as he enters, thereby passes into the divine city of life, and Paul now leads all of us through this wonderful city and shows us all the riches of this blessed life. It is all ours by justification through faith." (p.330)

Christ's Robe of Righteousness, wrapped around the sinner, both frees from and provides for the enrobed sinner in the following ways:

God-righteousness frees us from **wrath**; giving us **peace** with God (5:1-11)

God-righteousness frees us from the **consequence of Adam's sin**; giving us **life** (5:12ff)

God-righteousness frees us from **sin**; giving us **righteousness** (ch 6)

God-righteousness frees us from **law**; giving us **grace** (ch 7)

God-righteousness frees us from **death**; giving us **hope** (ch 8)

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (5:1)

Paul rings out the affirmation of the objective legal standing of the Christian; the one who has been declared righteous with a God-righteousness by faith. The result of this is we no longer live under the fear of judgment and the wrath to come.

We now have peace with God which is not merely a subjective feeling but an objective reality!

The most immediate consequence of justification is reconciliation, which is the theme of Romans 5. Listen to Paul's parallel thoughts in 2 Corinthians 5...

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us

the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”
(vss 17-19)

MacArthur says, “When a person embraces Jesus Christ in repentant faith, the sinless Son of God who made perfect satisfaction for all our sins makes that person eternally at peace with God the Father. In fact, Christ not only brings peace to the believer but “He Himself is our peace” (Eph 2:14). This all points out how crucial it is to understand the nature and extent of the atoning work of Jesus the Lord as the basis for assurance.

Although the peace of which Paul is speaking in this passage is the objective peace of being reconciled to God, awareness of that objective truth gives the believer a deep and wonderful subjective peace as well. To know that one is a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, cannot but give Christians what Charles Hodge called the ‘sweet quiet of the soul’. (p.275)

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (5:2)

Observe this grand God-blessed description, “this grace in which we stand”. Listen to the closing benediction of Jude.

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”
(vss 24, 25)

“Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” (1 Kings 17:1)

Observe here that the consequent of knowing we stand in the grace Christ has won for us causes us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God! Here is a future orientation!

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (5:3-5)

So while this peace with God that comes through justification by faith and causes us to stand in grace lifts our eyes up to the hope of future glory, it also impacts our day to day lives.

Lenski says, "Although tribulation is nothing but penalty for the wicked, it is used by God as a means for drawing the believers nearer to himself." (p.337)

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:2-4)

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." (James 1:12)

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word." (Psalms 119:67)

"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." (Psalm 119:71)

"I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me." (Psalm 119:75)

"And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.'" It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:5-11)

There is an entire theology behind pain, suffering & affliction.

C.S. Lewis captured it in part saying, "Pain is God's megaphone to a deaf world". George MacDonald probed even deeper saying, "Suffering is the sharp-toothed sheepdog that keeps us in the fold."

Consider again the description of 5:5, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Lenski says, "In the economy of the Holy Trinity it is his [the Holy Spirit's] work to operate upon and within our hearts. Paul's statement regarding the Spirit is only

preliminary, introductory; he intends to tell us much more in chapter 8, which is the fullest commentary on what is said here...

In the moment of justification we receive the Spirit as a gift. But he enters our hearts by means of the Word... We realize his presence by the power he exerts in our hearts by means of the Word. The more we hear and absorb that Word, letting it fill and control us, the more the Spirit fills us.

The figure used in "poured out" is that of water. Our dry, arid, lifeless hearts have poured out into them the love of God for us. This may come upon us like a stream or like a rain of falling water and change our hearts into fruitful, delightful soil.

Again the means is the Word, the sum and substance of which is the love of God, and this love, not as a mere feeling in God toward us, but as actively conveying all the gifts of this love to us by means of the Word.

How much of his love embodied in his gifts is poured out in our hearts depends on the receptivity which the Spirit is able to produce in us. Let your heart not remain a thimble or a tin cup, let it be a vast lake. The volume of love's gifts from God through Spirit and Word is unrestrained, the only restraint put upon it is our reluctance, our timidity our lurking thoughts of unbelief..." (p 340ff)

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (5:6-11)

In verses 6 and 8 the apostle does not define specifically the nature of the death of Christ on our behalf. He states simply that it was death on behalf of the ungodly (vs.6) and on our behalf (vs.8). But now in verses 9 and 10 we are given clear definition of the specific character of the death of Christ and of the benefits secured for us by it.

As John Murray says, "Justification is strictly forensic in its nature and therefore the blood of Christ, whether viewed as constituting justification or as laying the ground for our justification, must be interpreted as having forensic efficacy. Thus it is impossible not to define the efficacy and virtue of Jesus' blood in forensic categories. For here it is directly related to what is specifically and only forensic. This is not a

category suddenly thrust forward by the apostle; it was already implicit in 3:25, 26.” (The Epistle to the Romans, Murray, p.170-171)

Theologian Charles Hodge says, “If [God] loved us because we loved him, he would love us only so long as we love him, and on that condition; and then our salvation would depend on the constancy of our treacherous hearts. But as God loved us as sinners, as Christ died for us as ungodly, our salvation depends, as the apostle argues, not on our loveliness, but on the constancy of the love of God.”

God’s immense love is supremely demonstrated by Christ’s willingness to die for the ungodly, the unrighteous, the unlovable and ugly. In truth, the Divine Love so transcends mere human love as to eternally shame us. We shall never come close to responding back with what He has given us.

But here observe a unity of theme in this the fifth chapter.

The overarching emphasis is on the superabundant greatness of Christ and His act over that of Adam and his act. The contrast is revealed through the phrase “much more” which is used twice in the first eleven verses and twice again in verses 12-21.

*“Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, **much more** shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.” (vs 9)*

*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **much more**, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” (vs 10)*

*“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, **much more** have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.” (vs 15)*

*“Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded **all the more...**” (vs 21)*

The “*much more*” nature of Paul’s thoughts, particularly in verses 1 - 11 center on a key thought: If, while we were enemies of God, in rebellion, outcast and under the sentence of death, if then it was that Christ died for sinners, how much more likely is it now that God will keep His word and saved us from the future wrath to come!

If He would do all this for us when we were utterly cut off from Him, will he now renege on His promises, now that He’s already done all this? If God’s grace covers the sins even of His enemies, how much more does it cover the sins of His children?

“If God had the power and the will to redeem us in the first place, how much more, does He have the power and the will to keep us redeemed? In other words, if God

brought us to Himself through the death of His Son when we were enemies, how much more, now that we are His reconciled children, will He keep us saved by the life of His Son? If the dying Savior reconciled us to God, surely the living Savior can and will keep us reconciled.”

MacArthur says, “Paul here reasons from the greater to the lesser. It is a greater work of God to bring sinners to grace than to bring saints to glory, because sin is further from grace than grace is from glory!” (p.287)

Romans 5:12-21 Saved from Adam’s original sin

“12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned – 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (5:12-21)

Lutheran theologian Lenski says, “This is theology, indeed. With a sure hand face is placed beside fact, and the one paragraph is enough. Where save in Holy Writ is there a paragraph to compare with this? The detailed discussion on various points must not be allowed to confuse the student, must not dim his vision of the immensity which Paul here causes to tower before him.” (p.357)

Reformed theologian John Murray says,

“In verses 12 - 21 the apostle develops the parallel between Adam and Christ, Adam as the head of the whole human race, Christ as the head of the [body of redeemed or justified ones.]

That there is analogy is shown by the statement in verse 14 that Adam is 'the type of the one to come'. But it is also shown by the sustained comparisons that are instituted throughout the passage, whether expressly or by implication (verses 12, 15-19).

When we say that there are parallels and comparisons we must not overlook the fact that from the outset there is a sustained contrast between the process that was set in operation by Adam and that set in operation by Christ.

There is analogy but analogy in respect of what is completely antithetical. We cannot grasp the truths of world-wide significance set forth in this passage unless we recognize that two antithetical complexes are contrasted. The first is the complex of sin-condemnation-death and the second is that of righteousness-justification-life. These are invariable combinations. Sin sets in operation the inevitable consequents of condemnation and death, righteousness the consequents of justification and life, and, as is obvious, these are antithetical at each point of the parallel.

The fact of paramount importance, however, in this passage is that the operation of these complexes in the human race is not to be viewed atomistically. Solidarity comes into effect.

Sin does not set in operation the sequence associated with it apart from the corporate relationship which Adam sustains to the race and the race to Adam. And righteousness is not brought to bear upon the sin-condemnation-death complex, which Adam inaugurated, apart from the solidaric relationship which Christ sustains to lost men and lost men to Christ.

We may not forget that the apostle is still dealing with his grand theme, justification by faith. In verses 1 - 11 he had dealt with some of the consequences emanating from justification and with the assurances toward God which these fruits evoked.

What is the purpose of this passage (verses 12-21) in relation to this theme?... Perhaps none is more relevant than that the apostle is now demonstrating that the divine method of justifying the ungodly proceeds from and is necessitated by the principles in terms of which God governs the human race.

God governs men and relates himself to men in terms of solidaric relationship. And just as the sin, condemnation, and death in which all members of the race are involved can never be construed or estimated in purely individualistic terms, so we never find righteousness, justification, and life in operation except as the solidarity constituted by God's grace is brought to bear upon our human situation.

There is an identity of *modus operandi* and this *modus operandi* in God's dealings with men belongs to the integrity of his established government. It is the broad perspective of the divine philosophy of divine-human relationships that comes before us in this passage. And to aver that this passage is extraneous to the doctrine of the apostle or a digression in the style of rabbinical allegorizing is to miss what is pivotal in the central thesis of this epistle." (Murray, p.178-179)

John MacArthur says,

"Many people consider Romans 5:12-21... to be the most difficult passage in the epistle. At first reading it seems complex and enigmatic, and in one sense it is... As far as complete human comprehension is concerned, the truths of this passage are beyond reach. But on the other hand, the truths themselves are wonderfully simple and clear when accepted in humble faith as God's Word.

Verses 12-14 lay the foundation for the remainder of the chapter by pointing out the obvious truth that death is universal to the human race. In these three verses Paul focuses on Adam and the reign of death that his sin engendered. In the remainder of the chapter (vv. 15-21) he focuses on Christ and the reign of life...

...And although the basic truths he presents are in themselves rather simple, his argument in defense of them is not. His divinely-inspired reasoning plunges the reader deep into mysteries that we will never fully understand until we one day see our Lord face to face. The primary purpose of this passage, however, is not to explain why all people die. Paul brings in the subject of death merely to establish the principle that one person's deeds can inexorably affect many other people. Paul's primary objective in this chapter is to show how one Man's death provided salvation for many, and to do so the apostle first shows the reasonableness of that truth since one man's sin produced condemnation for many.

Paul's analogy of Adam and Christ clarifies several truths about God's plan of redemption, but it by no means clarifies every aspect of that marvelous provision. It is not that any of God's truths are unexplainable but that the explanations of many of them are beyond human comprehension. Our responsibility is to accept in faith both what is clear and what is not, what is comprehensible and what remains a mystery.

Observe first that verses 12 - 21 complete the thought of verses 6 - 11.

In vs 5 - 11, Paul speaks only of us, of the justified, of those who by faith embrace the reconciliation offered. But more must be said, namely for what Christ did for the whole world of sinners.

Hence there is not a "we" in the whole paragraph of 12 - 21; all is objective, all is historical.

He has spoken of us as being originally weak (helpless), sinners, enemies (vs. 6, 8, 10), and that by being justified through Christ we attain salvation.

Much more must now be said. Adam's sin killed all mankind; it made death reign supreme. That is the real fact in regard to sin.

But as terrible as the damage that came through Adam, Christ, the 2nd Adam, has more than made good, so that by the most wondrous gift ("gift" will occur 5x in verses 15-17), "*grace might reign through righteousness unto life eternal through Him, Jesus Christ, our Lord*" (vs. 21).

In verses 6 – 11 the focus is on salvation. In verses 12 – 21 the focus is on the life that is the result of justification; the two are one.

Beginning with himself and the Romans in vs 6 – 11, Paul in vs 12 – 21 sweeps through the world age, from Adam to the last day, from one border of eternity to the other, Christ being in the center.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world... (5:12)

- "*For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*" (1 Cor 15:21-22)
- Observe that sin entered not through Eve, but through Adam. It was the man who was first called to give an account. It is the man who is named by the Spirit of God as the one through whom sin & death entered mankind.

Eve sinned first and then Adam, it is true. "Yet not until Adam fell did the sin and the death enter into the world. Eve was herself derived from Adam. The entire human race is of one blood and not of two. The fatal act that involved the race was Adam's. The answer to the hypothetical question as to what would have happened if Eve alone had sinned, if Adam had not followed her in sin, is that 'every well-trained ass keeps off the hypothetical ice to avoid breaking a leg.'" (Lenski, p.262)

- Observe, that the word sin is **singular**. I conclude this indicates what is being spoken of is not so much specific acts of transgression but rather is the sinful nature of depravity. MacArthur will say, "Just as Adam bequeathed his physical nature to his posterity, he also bequeathed to them his spiritual nature, which henceforth was characterized and dominated by sin." (p.293)

- Adam represented the all mankind that would descend from him. Thus when Adam sinned, all felt the full impact of it.
- Consider the questions involved in the interpretation of what we had imputed to us in Adam's sin.

And death through sin...

- The original creation intent & design was immortality. Death was & is punishment, the consequence of sin.
- Contemporary religious thought that death is a friend to be embraced is flat wrong.

"The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:26)

"Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." (Revel 20:14)

- Theologically, death has three stages or possible components: (1) Spiritual death, (2) Physical death & (3) Eternal death.

And so death spread to all men because all sinned...

- *"All sinned..."?*
- What are the questions here? The issue is how do we understand the "all sinned"? Are we to understand it as "death spread to all men because all would sin"? Or are we to understand it as "death spread to all men because all men sinned in Adam's sin"? In other words, something was reckoned, imputed, to all mankind the moment Adam sinned.
- **Methodist theologian, Cranfield** says, "the question has still to be asked whether 'sinned' refers to men's participation in Adam's sin (and not to their sinning in their own persons) or to men's own personal sinning.

The former view is strongly supported by a good many interpreters who claim that its acceptance is required by the comparison drawn between Christ and Adam, since men's righteousness in Christ owes nothing to their own works. But the latter view should, we think, be preferred, since there is nothing in the context to suggest that the verb 'sin' is being used here in any other than its

ordinary sense, and nowhere else does Paul use it otherwise than of actual personal sinning.

And the argument against this view and in favour of the former from the Christ-Adam comparison is not cogent, since Paul in this passage insists on the dissimilarity as well as on the similarity between Christ and Adam, and there is no reason to assume that, because he believed Christ to be the sole source of men's righteousness, Paul must have regarded Adam equally as being alone responsible for men's ruin.

We conclude that 'sinned' in this clause refers to men's sinning in their own persons but as a consequence of the corrupt nature inherited from Adam."

[From Cranfield, C.E.B. *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.]

- In contrast, ponder the comments of **Martin Luther**
"The idea of damning the whole world because one man bit into an apple! Equally: The idea of taking a lot of men to heaven because one man once died on the cross! Dogmatics and Apologetics have long ago made a crushing and a detailed reply. Sin and death have one source – Adam; righteousness and life also have one source – the second Adam, Christ. If not – what then? Yes, what then? Only the rationalistic arguments of the moralists, all of whom Paul has crushed already in chapter 2." (Quoted from Lenski, p.383)
- Let's dissect this a bit further by observing two concepts under consideration here:

First, the question of guilt. Was Adam's forensic guilt imputed to all mankind so that at the point of conception the child is guilty & doomed?

Second, the question of depravity or inner corruption. Was Adam's depravity imputed to us? Nearly all agree at this point that something was imputed to us. The differences lie in the degree of corruption. Specifically, was the will left free or in total bondage; bondage of the will; i.e. complete inability.

Augustinian Calvinism - Forensic guilt & Total Depravity (complete inability & thus bondage of the will). Fourth century; embraced by both Luther & Calvin; opposed in his day by Pelagius.

Pelagianism - There is no consequence to us from Adam's sin. Every infant is born in a state of spiritual purity without any depravity or corruption and with free will intact.

Semi-Pelagianism - The consequence of Adam's sin is that each child has partial corruption or depravity. There is no forensic guilt imputed and the free will is intact. Observe that this was the view of the Patristic Church Fathers until the time of St. Augustine. Your reading from David Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, "Free Will and Predestination"* exposed you to a wide number of early Church leaders who addressed this subject all landing in what is today called "semi-pelagianism". Excluding Roman Catholicism and Reformed theology, this is, in our day, the view of nearly all other denominations.

Roman Catholicism

Catholic dogma agrees with semi-pelagianism in that it accepts a partial depravity which leaves freedom of the will intact. However, they agree with Augustinianism in that they believe infants inherit forensic guilt from Adam.

What was imputed to us through Adam?

Consider some passages...

*"And so death spread to all men, because **all sinned**."* (Romans 5:12)

*"For as through the one man's disobedience the many **were made sinners**..."* (Romans 5:19)

*"The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity [**avon**; #5771] and transgression [**pasha**; #6588] and sin [**cheta**; #2403], but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'" (Exodus 34:6-7)*

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity [5771]..." (Psalm 51:5)

"The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity [5771], nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity [5771]; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself." (Ezekiel 18:20)

*"Repent and turn away from all your transgressions [**pesha**], so that iniquity [5771] may not become a stumbling block to you."* (Ezek 18:30)

The Hebrew terms for "sin" seem to have greater precision of usage than the Greek.

The Hebrew *cheta* (2403) means to "miss the mark", much as the Greek *harmatia*.

The Hebrew *pesha* (6588) means "trespass" or "transgression" and is thereby more serious an offense than *cheta*.

The Hebrew *avon* (5771) has, in the root word from which it comes, the meaning "to writhe", "to be crooked", "distorted", "turned upside down" (see #5753).

Thus, I understand both *cheta* & *pesha* to be things actively done by the sinner, while *avon* is what happens within the sinner as a consequence of the aforesaid action.

Sin thus brings the double trouble of

(1) **Forensic guilt**

(2) **Corruption** (pollution; sickness; also called depravity).

Thus the words to the hymn, Rock of Ages:

Be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure.

Thus, consider what Paul says in Romans 5:13, "*for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.*"

Here he implicitly suggests there is a difference between an active breaking of a command and being sinful. There is a difference between a transgression and having the inner state of sinfulness. There is a difference between the two categories of (1) *cheta* & *pesha*, as what is actively done, and (2) *avon*, a depraved corrupted polluted & twisted sin nature.

This leads to the question, did that which was imputed to us from Adam, involve forensic guilt; as in punishment deserved? If so, how do we "square" this with what Ezekiel 18 says that the punishment due a father shall not be given the son and vice versa?

Consider the strong statement in Ezekiel 18 that a son shall not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity.

"The son shall not (3808) bear (5375) the iniquity (5771) of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20; KJV)

"The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity" (NASV)

#5375; *Lo* or *Loh*; "A particle of negation used to make a positive statement negative or to negate the noun that follows"

#5375; *Nasa*; "to lift up or bear"

Consider how verse 30 implicitly suggests a difference of “category” between *pesha* and *avon*; a difference in category between a trespass and a sinful nature.

“Repent (7725), and turn (7725) from all your transgressions (6588); so iniquity (5771) shall not (3808) be your ruin (4383).” (Ezekiel 18:30; KJV)

“Repent and turn away from all your transgressions (6588), so that iniquity(5771) may not become a stumbling block to you.” (NASV)

#7725; *Shuv*; “to turn back or around”

#4383; *Mikhshol*; “stumbling block, cause of falling”

“Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart..." (Ezek 14:4; KJV)

“Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet. I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols..." (NASV)

The description given here of iniquity as a “stumbling block” suggests that it itself is not the trespass or sin. Could there be here a parallel flow of thought with James?

“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” (1:14,15)

Here, “lust”, understood as desire, is not the sin itself. It is however the occasion for stumbling and thus sinning.

Do we have here a simple description of that which is suggested in the Hebrew terms *Cheta*, *Pesha* & *Avon*?

Could it be that "iniquity" (*avon*) is what was passed to us from Adam. Exodus seems strongly to imply this. Indeed, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is largely based on this understanding of Exodus 34:7.

We each are therefore conceived with a depraved nature. Here is the imputation of iniquity; *avon* (5771). But Romans 5:13 says, "*sin is not imputed when there is no law*". What this may mean is that forensic guilt is not imputed although the consequence of death was applied beginning in the garden.

Under this understanding, the iniquity, or sinful nature inherited from Adam, does not involve forensic guilt until such a time that the one with the imputed sinful nature, actually breaks a command thus transgressing. Life experience strongly suggests to me that this transgression or sin borne out of the inner corrupted nature, takes place at a very early stage of life.

To the degree that these thoughts are Biblical accurate, they represent my understanding of what would be called Semi-Pelagianism. There was corruption or depravity imputed to us when Adam fell. The Hebrew term is *avon*. This does not however, necessitate the imputation of forensic guilt. Such occurs when each individual becomes aware of "law" and trespasses.

Exodus 34:7 & other passages (Exodus 20:5-6; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9 and Jeremiah 31:29-30 all clearly state that the iniquity of the father is *visited* upon the children to the third and fourth generation.

Ezekiel 18 however clearly states that the punishment for iniquity falls only on the one who sinned. A son does not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity.

Clearly then, there is a difference between the category of "visited upon" and "punished for". Iniquity is visited or imputed to us from Adam and through our fathers, but we are not guilty in a forensic sense until we, as an individual, have sinned or trespassed.

Consider now the contrast between the condemning act of Adam and the redemptive act of Christ (Romans 5:6 -21)

Vs 6	the ungodly	Christ died for
Vs 8	sinners	Christ died for
Vs 9	If justified by His blood	Then saved from God's wrath
Vs 10	If reconciled as enemies	Much more shall be saved
Vs 15	By the transgression of the one the many died	By the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ the gift of grace abounded to many
Vs 16	One transgression: Judgment Justification & Condemnation	Many transgression: Free gift &
Vs 17	Death reigned thru the transgression of the one righteous	Life will reign through the One to those who receive the grace gift of

Vs 18	One transgression resulted in condemnation to all men	One act of righteousness resulted in justification of life to all men
Vs 19	Thru the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners	Thru the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous
Vs 20	Law increased transgressions abounding	Increased sin resulted in grace
Vs 21	Sin reigned in death	Grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord

"It might be said that Adam's sinful act, devastating as it was, had but a one-dimensional effect - it brought death to everyone. But the effect of Christ's redemptive act has facets beyond measure, because He not only restores man to spiritual life but gives him the very life of God. Death by nature is static and empty, whereas life by nature is active and full. Only life can abound." (MacArthur, p.303)

There is indeed a unity of theme in the fifth chapter. Observe again the phrase "much more", which occurs twice in verses 1-11 and twice again in verses 12-21. Paul's emphasis here is on the superabundant greatness of Christ and His act over that of Adam and his act. (Lanski)

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

Romans 4 Abraham justified by faith

*"1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?
2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.
3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."
4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.
5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness..." (4:1-5)*

In 3:21, Paul says that this God-righteousness is *"witnessed by the Law and the Prophets"*. To this evidence Paul now turns and devotes the entire chapter to.

Observe that already in 1:16-17, the initial statement of this epistle's theme, Paul cited Habakkuk 2:4 as voicing the God-ordained theme that *"the just shall live by faith!"*

But now rather than listing a litany of passages on this topic, as he did on the topic of sin, see 3:9ff, Paul does something far more important.

He considers the case of Abraham with whom God's covenantal promises were first given. So important a personage is this Abraham who dominates the whole of the Old Testament, that God even names Himself *"the God of Abraham!"*

Ponder the significance of this in light of Hebrews 11

*"By faith Abraham obeyed... 13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore **God is not ashamed to be called their God...**" (11:8-16)*

Do we make Him proud? Or do we bring Him shame? We each know...

So, it is Abraham that dominates the whole Old Testament standing as "the father of believers". He is THE Old Testament example of justification by faith alone.

But He is also far more. He was justified while he was as yet uncircumcised thus becoming the father of all Gentile believers. It was after this that he received circumcision as the seal of justification thereby becoming the father of all Jewish believers.

In both capacities he stands for all time as the father of many nations (ethnos) through the Seed, our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Indeed, Abraham puts the whole Old Testament and every utterance, in regard to justification by faith, into the right light. Place this chapter on Abraham alongside John 8:33-59 where Jesus debated the Jews regarding Abraham, and you can see why Paul presents Abraham as the supreme Old Testament witness to justification by faith alone.

But at first glance, and in view of James 2:17-26, Abraham does not seem to serve this purpose. For in James we read that Abraham was justified not by faith alone but also by (ek) works.

*“14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 **So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** 18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?** 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” – and he was called a friend of God. 24 **You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.** 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”*

Now juxtapose this with Romans 4:1-2...

“1 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.”

Observe, the close follow-up, by Paul, to his rhetorical question in 3:27,

“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

The grand doctrine of Justification by faith alone in which a God-righteousness is wrapped around us leaves the newly clothed in salvation garments sinner without boasting of any kind!

Paul's question on Abraham here further establishes this, *"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God."*

If, Abraham was justified by or out of works, then he would have something to boast about that he had done! Verse 4 establishes the clear principle that wages are what is due and come as the result of works.

But if all our work righteousness is as filthy rags, and if *"every mouth is stopped"* because *"by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight"*, then Abraham could not have been justified by works.

As the Scripture says, *"And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."* (Genesis 15:5-6)

How then do we harmonize Paul and James? Is harmonization possible?

Consider Paul's words in Ephesians 2:8-10...

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Observe the sequential steps:

(1st) **Grace comes first in this gift of salvation!** God's initiative and move comes first offering salvation, not on the basis of works, but as a gift, to sinful mankind. *"But God demonstrates His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly!"* (Romans 5)

(2nd) **Faith comes as the reception of this grace from God's gift of salvation!** Faith is the required conditional response in man to this offer of Grace! As Paul said to the men of Athens, *"God now commands all people everywhere to repent!"* Repentance is the flip side of faith.

(3rd) **Saving faith is a faith that is obedient, walking in God ordained and beforehand prepared good works!** Saving faith invariably produces good works. But these good works are not so that it will be saved, but because it is already saved! Saving faith is a faith which will manifest itself in good works.

The obedience of good works do indeed have a place in our salvation. As Luther rightly said, "Good works do not precede salvation, but they follow it." This is true fundamentally because...

Faith is an Act but Not a Work

Faith means to penitently trust in Jesus Christ. It is coming to Him. It is casting all your cares on Him.

The old acrostic – Forsaking All I Trust Him, is theologically doctrinally accurate.

We all know the old Greek acrostic for fish: (*icthys*). John Gerstner suggests a new acrostic on the Greek word for faith (*pistis*):

Polluted I Surrender To Jesus Savior.

And no text of Holy Scripture tells it quite as well as Romans 4:5: "*To the man who does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*"

Notice the seven ways this one verse, Romans 4:5, teaches justification by faith alone:

1. The justified one does "not work."
2. The justified one "trusts."
3. The justified one trusts not in himself but in another: "God."
4. The justified one confesses himself to be "wicked."
5. The justified one does not have faith in his faith.
6. The justified one sees his faith only as "credited" to him.
7. The justified one sees his faith credited as "righteousness."

Truly the hymn does not exaggerate when it says,

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

*Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.*

Nothing in my hand I bring,

*Simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.*

Now the point here is to understand that there is a God-ordained sequence:

Grace comes first.

God comes first. God has planned from eternity past all Redemption's plan.

Faith comes in response to God's grace.

Faith comes in response to God's **gift**. Faith is man's required response to the God initiated gift offer of salvation. The sovereignly ordained response by man is faith. Faith is to simply, as a child, place all of one's self in His hands, at the foot of the cross. Faith fundamentally is penitent trust.

Faith is the sinner in his own rowboat, a rowboat called self-righteousness, just seconds before plummeting over the edge of Niagra Falls, and the God-man, on the shore, casts the rope of salvation, landing it across the boat.

The hopeless & doomed sinner, has one of two choices. He can trust in his own stuff, his own boat, his own self-righteousness, or he can grab that rope with all he has and fling himself out of his boat of self-righteousness, in utter trust upon the power and goodwill of the Saviour holding the other end of the rope.

Faith responds to God's offered gift of grace.

Good works follow and flow out of saving faith.

Good works are the result of saving faith.

Now observe,

Paul's line of reasoning in Romans 4 is that Abraham was justified by God, on the basis of faith in God, long before the seal of circumcision was given.

Chronologically, Paul is arguing out of Genesis 15 when God brought him outside the tent and said, *"Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them... so shall your offspring be. And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness."* (Gen 15:5-6)

Circumcision would not be given Abraham until Genesis 17, when God gave the promise that one year later, she would bear a son.

Isaac is not born until Genesis 21. It is then not until Genesis 22 that God commands Abraham, *“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”* (Gen 22:2)

When James cites Abraham saying, *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar... You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone”*, James is referencing Genesis 22.

Paul’s reasoning that Abraham was justified on the basis of faith alone (Romans 4) is out of Genesis 15.

James’ reasoning that Abraham was justified by works (James 2) is out of Genesis 22.

They are referencing two different faith events in Abraham’s life; two differing responses required by Abraham. The first was faith and faith alone. The second was no less one of faith but now involved the additional act of obedience; doing what God had commanded.

Now, did God wait until Abraham had proved his faith by sacrificing Isaac to declare Abraham justified? No, Paul says. In Genesis 15, God said, look up. So shall your descendants be. Abraham looked and believed. He had done nothing. He had performed no work, no good deed, no act of obedience. He simply believed. He trusted God completely. And God reckoned it to him as righteousness.

But, what if, in Genesis 22, upon hearing the command of God, Abraham had chosen to ignore it or flat disobey it? What would this “work”, this “deed”, declare about his alleged profession of faith?

James’ whole point is that when the faith that God justifies encounters a command of God, requiring obedience, such a saving faith will show itself in good works; in obedience.

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:14-17)

Saving faith will, by of its very nature, produce the good works of clothing, feeding and sheltering the one in need.

Saving faith will, because of its very nature, when commanded to do the unthinkable, it will offer its son in sacrifice. Saving faith will say, "to hear is to obey."

Saving faith will, upon hearing the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, will respond in faith, and upon learning of Christ's example & command to be baptized, will the same day if possible reveal itself in obedience. As MacArthur says, "Baptism is the first and easiest act of obedience."

But what if the one professing faith says, "No" at baptism or at any other clearly understood command of God? Friends, we are not saved by our works, but our works do reveal to us our salvation.

The book of James, then, is an assault of spurious faith

Evidently there were some in the very early church who flirted with the notion that faith could be some kind of static, inert, inanimate assent to facts. The book of James, probably the earliest New Testament epistle, specifically confronts this error.

James sounds almost as if he were writing to the 20th century. He says people *can* be deluded into thinking they believe when in fact they do not, and he says the single factor that distinguishes counterfeit faith from the real thing is the righteous behavior inevitably produced in those who have authentic faith.

Is it enough to know and understand and assent to the facts of the gospel – even holding the "*inward conviction*" that these truths apply to me personally – and yet *never* shun sin or submit to the Lord Jesus?

Is a person who holds that kind of belief guaranteed eternal life? Does such a hope constitute faith in the sense Scripture uses the term?

James clearly teaches that it does not. Real faith will produce righteous behavior. And the true character of saving faith may be examined in light of the believer's works. Did not Jesus say, "You will know a tree by its fruit"?

Ponder that this resonates with all of Old Testament and New Testament soteriology. One enters into salvation by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). Faith is by nature turned toward, inclined toward, obedience (Acts 5:32; Rom 1:5, 2:8, 16:26), so good works are inevitable in the life of one who truly believes.

These works have no part in bringing about salvation (Eph 2:9; Rom 3:20, 24; 4:5; Titus 3:5), but they do show the presence of salvation (Eph 2:10; 5:9; 1 John 2:5).

Put another way, "faith is always *obedient* faith. Salvation by faith does not negate the necessity and importance of works. Rather it calls for good works as a consequence of faith." Works, then, distinguish true faith from counterfeit varieties.

Said another way, there is nominal faith and real faith. There is intellectual faith and heart faith. There is sensual faith and there is spiritual faith. There is dead faith and there is vital faith. There is traditional faith which may fall short of transforming personal faith. There is a faith that may be commended as orthodox and yet have no more saving value than the faith of demons.

James attacks all brands of "faith" that fall short of the biblical standard. What MacArthur and others have sometimes termed "mental assent," James characterizes as mere hearing, empty profession, demonic orthodoxy, and dead faith.

Some additional thoughts through the fourth chapter:

7. "It was counted to him as righteousness"

Counted? **Reckoned.** In this legal transaction, "something is transferred to the subject in question and reckoned as his, which he in his own person does not have... it is accounted to the person *per substitutionem*; the object present (faith) takes the place of what it counts for (righteousness), it is substituted for it." (Lenski, p.289)

This expression, involving the term *logizomai*, is the technical one for God's declaring a person righteous. When Abraham believed he was in his own person no more righteous than he was before he believed, but God counted his faith as righteousness for him.

God's accounting did not make him righteous, it did not change Abraham, it changed his status with God. Although he was not righteous, God counted him as righteous nevertheless.

Faith is not righteousness, it is counted or reckoned as being righteousness. The believer really and in himself is never righteous, he is righteous only in God's accounting.

What is there in his faith that God can account for righteousness to the believer? No virtue or merit of either the believer or of his faith, nothing of this sort to the end of his life; something else entirely, the contents of his faith, Christ, his ransom, his merit.

It is the faith that holds these that God counts for righteousness and no other faith. The substitution takes place right here. Christ's merit and righteousness is his own, God counts it as though it were the believer's. Faith only lays its hand upon it, God himself moves it to do so. Then by grace and altogether gratuitously God reckons faith with its content as righteousness for the one who believes.

Lenski says, "Ever and ever God's verdict is only a reckoning, a setting down to the man's credit what he has not earned by working, what another has earned for him, and what this man has been moved to receive by faith. This answers the question as to how God can reckon his faith for righteousness. We must note the Biblical conception of faith:

It is the hand and the heart filled with Christ. It is not mere believing but the possession of Christ. State it thus: God reckons the possession of Christ by faith for righteousness. This helps to show why the Scriptures rate faith so highly: **it is not because of faith as an act but because of the contents of God-wrought faith.**

8. Paul references what David says as being in harmony with this doctrine.

"Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." (4:6-8)

The Hebrew *ashre* is exclamatory: "Oh, the blessedness of!" This is spiritual wellbeing: "Oh, how in every way things are spiritually well with" the man here described.

9. The great fact Paul argues here in chapter 4 is that Abraham was justified by faith long before he was circumcised. His faith alone resulted in justification. This towers above all else.

And this is vital for us today; we who are true children of the father of believers although we are not of his physical blood and are without the rite which he and those of his blood received during the time of the old covenant.

10. Observe the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* here taught.

"Who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." (vs.17)

11. Observe the life lesson of giving God glory versus anxious distrust.

“No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God.” (vs.20) Abraham practiced the wise counsel of Philippians 4:6-10.

12. Observe here the Doctrine of Double Imputation

Through and at the Cross our sins imputed by God to Christ.

Through Christ’s Resurrection His Righteousness imputed by God to us.

“It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” (Romans 4:25)

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Romans 5:1-11 Saved from Wrath

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. 6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:1-11)

Consider Chapters 5, 6, 7 & 8 as a whole.

These chapters describe the blessed effects of God’s righteousness through faith, and throughout these effects are described in *connection with their cause, Jesus Christ, the substance of our faith.*

Consider how frequently is mentioned the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1:4)

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (1:7)

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (5:1)

"More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (5:11)

"So that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (5:21)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (6:23)

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin." (7:25)

"Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (8:39)

When Paul announced his great theme: *"The Righteousness of God from faith to faith"* (in 1:17), he added from Habakkuk: *"And the just shall live by faith."*

From 3:21 to the end of chapter 4, Paul describes and illustrates this faith and its righteousness. Now in chapters 5 thru 8, he describes the life that results from it.

Lenski says, "He who by grace is led through the golden portal of faith, God's declaration of righteousness descending upon him as he enters, thereby passes into the divine city of life, and Paul now leads all of us through this wonderful city and shows us all the riches of this blessed life. It is all ours by justification through faith." (p.330)

Christ's Robe of Righteousness, wrapped around the sinner, both frees from and provides for the enrobed sinner in the following ways:

God-righteousness frees us from **wrath**; giving us **peace** with God (5:1-11)

God-righteousness frees us from the **consequence of Adam's sin**; giving us **life** (5:12ff)

God-righteousness frees us from **sin**; giving us **righteousness** (ch 6)

God-righteousness frees us from **law**; giving us **grace** (ch 7)

God-righteousness frees us from **death**; giving us **hope** (ch 8)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (5:1)

Paul rings out the affirmation of the objective legal standing of the Christian; the one who has been declared righteous with a God-righteousness by faith. The result of this is we no longer live under the fear of judgment and the wrath to come.

We now have peace with God which is not merely a subjective feeling but an objective reality!

The most immediate consequence of justification is reconciliation, which is the theme of Romans 5. Listen to Paul’s parallel thoughts in 2 Corinthians 5...

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”
(vss 17-19)

MacArthur says, “When a person embraces Jesus Christ in repentant faith, the sinless Son of God who made perfect satisfaction for all our sins makes that person eternally at peace with God the Father. In fact, Christ not only brings peace to the believer but “He Himself is our peace” (Eph 2:14). This all points out how crucial it is to understand the nature and extent of the atoning work of Jesus the Lord as the basis for assurance.

Although the peace of which Paul is speaking in this passage is the objective peace of being reconciled to God, awareness of that objective truth gives the believer a deep and wonderful subjective peace as well. To know that one is a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, cannot but give Christians what Charles Hodge called the ‘sweet quiet of the soul’. (p.275)

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (5:2)

Observe this grand God-blessed description, “this grace in which we stand”. Listen to the closing benediction of Jude.

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”
(vss 24, 25)

“Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” (1 Kings 17:1)

Observe here that the consequent of knowing we stand in the grace Christ has won for us causes us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God! Here is a future orientation!

“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (5:3-5)

So while this peace with God that comes through justification by faith and causes us to stand in grace lifts our eyes up to the hope of future glory, it also impacts our day to day lives.

Lenski says, “Although tribulation is nothing but penalty for the wicked, it is used by God as a means for drawing the believers nearer to himself.” (p.337)

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.” (Psalms 119:67)

“It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.” (Psalm 119:71)

“I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.” (Psalm 119:75)

“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.’ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:5-11)

There is an entire theology behind pain, suffering & affliction.

C.S. Lewis captured it in part saying, *"Pain is God's megaphone to a deaf world"*. George MacDonald probed even deeper saying, *"Suffering is the sharp-toothed sheepdog that keeps us in the fold."*

Consider again the description of 5:5, *"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*

Lenski says, "In the economy of the Holy Trinity it is his [the Holy Spirit's] work to operate upon and within our hearts. Paul's statement regarding the Spirit is only preliminary, introductory; he intends to tell us much more in chapter 8, which is the fullest commentary on what is said here..."

In the moment of justification we receive the Spirit as a gift. But he enters our hearts by means of the Word... We realize his presence by the power he exerts in our hearts by means of the Word. The more we hear and absorb that Word, letting it fill and control us, the more the Spirit fills us.

The figure used in "poured out" is that of water. Our dry, arid, lifeless hearts have poured out into them the love of God for us. This may come upon us like a stream or like a rain of falling water and change our hearts into fruitful, delightful soil.

Again the means is the Word, the sum and substance of which is the love of God, and this love, not as a mere feeling in God toward us, but as actively conveying all the gifts of this love to us by means of the Word.

How much of his love embodied in his gifts is poured out in our hearts depends on the receptivity which the Spirit is able to produce in us. Let your heart not remain a thimble or a tin cup, let it be a vast lake. The volume of love's gifts from God through Spirit and Word is unrestrained, the only restraint put upon it is our reluctance, our timidity our lurking thoughts of unbelief..." (p 340ff)

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (5:6-11)

In verses 6 and 8 the apostle does not define specifically the nature of the death of Christ on our behalf. He states simply that it was death on behalf of the ungodly (vs.6) and on our behalf (vs.8). But now in verses 9 and 10 we are given clear definition of the specific character of the death of Christ and of the benefits secured for us by it.

As John Murray says, "Justification is strictly forensic in its nature and therefore the blood of Christ, whether viewed as constituting justification or as laying the ground for our justification, must be interpreted as having forensic efficacy. Thus it is impossible not to define the efficacy and virtue of Jesus' blood in forensic categories. For here it is directly related to what is specifically and only forensic. This is not a category suddenly thrust forward by the apostle; it was already implicit in 3:25, 26." (The Epistle to the Romans, Murray, p.170-171)

Theologian Charles Hodge says, "If [God] loved us because we loved him, he would love us only so long as we love him, and on that condition; and then our salvation would depend on the constancy of our treacherous hearts. But as God loved us as sinners, as Christ died for us as ungodly, our salvation depends, as the apostle argues, not on our loveliness, but on the constancy of the love of God."

God's immense love is supremely demonstrated by Christ's willingness to die for the ungodly, the unrighteous, the unlovable and ugly. In truth, the Divine Love so transcends mere human love as to eternally shame us. We shall never come close to responding back with what He has given us.

But here observe a unity of theme in this the fifth chapter.

The overarching emphasis is on the superabundant greatness of Christ and His act over that of Adam and his act. The contrast is revealed through the phrase "much more" which is used twice in the first eleven verses and twice again in verses 12-21.

*"Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, **much more** shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."* (vs 9)

*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **much more**, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."* (vs 10)

*"But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, **much more** have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many."* (vs 15)

*"Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded **all the more...**"* (vs 21)

The “*much more*” nature of Paul’s thoughts, particularly in verses 1 - 11 center on a key thought: If, while we were enemies of God, in rebellion, outcast and under the sentence of death, if then it was that Christ died for sinners, how much more likely is it now that God will keep His word and saved us from the future wrath to come!

If He would do all this for us when we were utterly cut off from Him, will he now renege on His promises, now that He’s already done all this? If God’s grace covers the sins even of His enemies, how much more does it cover the sins of His children?

“If God had the power and the will to redeem us in the first place, how much more, does He have the power and the will to keep us redeemed? In other words, if God brought us to Himself through the death of His Son when we were enemies, how much more, now that we are His reconciled children, will He keep us saved by the life of His Son? If the dying Savior reconciled us to God, surely the living Savior can and will keep us reconciled.”

MacArthur says, “Paul here reasons from the greater to the lesser. It is a greater work of God to bring sinners to grace than to bring saints to glory, because sin is further from grace than grace is from glory!” (p.287)

Romans 5:12-21 Saved from Adam’s original sin

“12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned – 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (5:12-21)

Lutheran theologian Lenski says, “This is theology, indeed. With a sure hand face is placed beside fact, and the one paragraph is enough. Where save in Holy Writ is there a paragraph to compare with this? The detailed discussion on various points

must not be allowed to confuse the student, must not dim his vision of the immensity which Paul here causes to tower before him." (p.357)

Reformed theologian John Murray says,

"In verses 12 – 21 the apostle develops the parallel between Adam and Christ, Adam as the head of the whole human race, Christ as the head of the [body of redeemed or justified ones.]

That there is analogy is shown by the statement in verse 14 that Adam is 'the type of the one to come'. But it is also shown by the sustained comparisons that are instituted throughout the passage, whether expressly or by implication (verses 12, 15-19).

When we say that there are parallels and comparisons we must not overlook the fact that from the outset there is a sustained contrast between the process that was set in operation by Adam and that set in operation by Christ.

There is analogy but analogy in respect of what is completely antithetical. We cannot grasp the truths of world-wide significance set forth in this passage unless we recognize that two antithetical complexes are contrasted. The first is the complex of sin-condemnation-death and the second is that of righteousness-justification-life. These are invariable combinations. Sin sets in operation the inevitable consequents of condemnation and death, righteousness the consequents of justification and life, and, as is obvious, these are antithetical at each point of the parallel.

The fact of paramount importance, however, in this passage is that the operation of these complexes in the human race is not to be viewed atomistically. Solidarity comes into effect.

Sin does not set in operation the sequence associated with it apart from the corporate relationship which Adam sustains to the race and the race to Adam. And righteousness is not brought to bear upon the sin-condemnation-death complex, which Adam inaugurated, apart from the solidaric relationship which Christ sustains to lost men and lost men to Christ.

We may not forget that the apostle is still dealing with his grand theme, justification by faith. In verses 1 – 11 he had dealt with some of the consequences emanating from justification and with the assurances toward God which these fruits evoked.

What is the purpose of this passage (verses 12-21) in relation to this theme?... Perhaps none is more relevant than that the apostle is now demonstrating that the divine

method of justifying the ungodly proceeds from and is necessitated by the principles in terms of which God governs the human race.

God governs men and relates himself to men in terms of solidaric relationship. And just as the sin, condemnation, and death in which all members of the race are involved can never be construed or estimated in purely individualistic terms, so we never find righteousness, justification, and life in operation except s the solidarity constituted by God's grace is brought to bear upon our human situation.

There is an identity of *modus operandi* and this *modus operandi* in God's dealings with men belongs to the integrity of his established government. It is the broad perspective of the divine philosophy of divine-human relationships that comes before us in this passage. And to aver that this passage is extraneous to the doctrine of the apostle or a digression in the style of rabbinical allegorizing is to miss what is pivotal in the central thesis of this epistle." (Murray, p.178-179)

John MacArthur says,

"Many people consider Romans 5:12-21... to be the most difficult passage in the epistle. At first reading it seems complex and enigmatic, and in one sense it is... As far as complete human comprehension is concerned, the truths of this passage are beyond reach. But on the other hand, the truths themselves are wonderfully simple and clear when accepted in humble faith as God's Word.

Verses 12-14 lay the foundation for the remainder of the chapter by pointing out the obvious truth that death is universal to the human race. In these three verses Paul focuses on Adam and the reign of death that his sin engendered. In the remainder of the chapter (vv. 15-21) he focuses on Christ and the reign of life...

...And although the basic truths he presents are in themselves rather simple, his argument in defense of them is not. His divinely-inspired reasoning plunges the reader deep into mysteries that we will never fully understand until we one day see our Lord face to face. The primary purpose of this passage, however, is not to explain why all people die. Paul brings in the subject of death merely to establish the principle that one person's deeds can inexorably affect many other people. Paul's primary objective in this chapter is to show how one Man's death provided salvation for many, and to do so the apostle first shows the reasonableness of that truth since one man's sin produced condemnation for many.

Paul's analogy of Adam and Christ clarifies several truths about God's plan of redemption, but it by no means clarifies every aspect of that marvelous provision. It is not that any of God's truths are unexplainable but that the explanations of many of

them are beyond human comprehension. Our responsibility is to accept in faith both what is clear and what is not, what is comprehensible and what remains a mystery.

Observe first that verses 12 – 21 complete the thought of verses 6 – 11.

In vs 5 – 11, Paul speaks only of us, of the justified, of those who by faith embrace the reconciliation offered. But more must be said, namely for what Christ did for the whole world of sinners.

Hence there is not a “we” in the whole paragraph of 12 – 21; all is objective, all is historical.

He has spoken of us as being originally weak (helpless), sinners, enemies (vs. 6, 8, 10), and that by being justified through Christ we attain salvation.

Much more must now be said. Adam’s sin killed all mankind; it made death reign supreme. That is the real fact in regard to sin.

But as terrible as the damage that came through Adam, Christ, the 2nd Adam, has more than made good, so that by the most wondrous gift (“gift” will occur 5x in verses 15-17), “*grace might reign through righteousness unto life eternal through Him, Jesus Christ, our Lord*” (vs. 21).

In verses 6 – 11 the focus is on salvation. In verses 12 – 21 the focus is on the life that is the result of justification; the two are one.

Beginning with himself and the Romans in vs 6 – 11, Paul in vs 12 – 21 sweeps through the world age, from Adam to the last day, from one border of eternity to the other, Christ being in the center.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world... (5:12)

- *“For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Cor 15:21-22)*
- Observe that sin entered not through Eve, but through Adam. It was the man who was first called to give an account. It is the man who is named by the Spirit of God as the one through whom sin & death entered mankind.

Eve sinned first and then Adam, it is true. “Yet not until Adam fell did the sin and the death enter into the world. Eve was herself derived from Adam. The entire human race is of one blood and not of two. The fatal act that involved the race was Adam’s. The answer to the hypothetical question as to what

would have happened if Eve alone had sinned, if Adam had not followed her in sin, is that 'every well-trained ass keeps off the hypothetical ice to avoid breaking a leg.'" (Lenski, p.262)

- Observe, that the word sin is **singular**. I conclude this indicates what is being spoken of is not so much specific acts of transgression but rather is the sinful nature of depravity. MacArthur will say, "Just as Adam bequeathed his physical nature to his posterity, he also bequeathed to them his spiritual nature, which henceforth was characterized and dominated by sin." (p.293)
- Adam represented the all mankind that would descend from him. Thus when Adam sinned, all felt the full impact of it.
- Consider the questions involved in the interpretation of what we had imputed to us in Adam's sin.

And death through sin...

- The original creation intent & design was immortality. Death was & is punishment, the consequence of sin.
- Contemporary religious thought that death is a friend to be embraced is flat wrong.

"The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:26)

"Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." (Revel 20:14)

- Theologically, death has three stages or possible components: (1) Spiritual death, (2) Physical death & (3) Eternal death.

And so death spread to all men because all sinned...

- "All sinned..."?
- What are the questions here? The issue is how do we understand the "all sinned"? Are we to understand it as "death spread to all men because all would sin"? Or are we to understand it as "death spread to all men because all men sinned in Adam's sin"? In other words, something was reckoned, imputed, to all mankind the moment Adam sinned.

- **Methodist theologian, Cranfield** says, “the question has still to be asked whether ‘sinned’ refers to men’s participation in Adam’s sin (and not to their sinning in their own persons) or to men’s own personal sinning.

The former view is strongly supported by a good many interpreters who claim that its acceptance is required by the comparison drawn between Christ and Adam, since men’s righteousness in Christ owes nothing to their own works. But the latter view should, we think, be preferred, since there is nothing in the context to suggest that the verb ‘sin’ is being used here in any other than its ordinary sense, and nowhere else does Paul use it otherwise than of actual personal sinning.

And the argument against this view and in favour of the former from the Christ-Adam comparison is not cogent, since Paul in this passage insists on the dissimilarity as well as on the similarity between Christ and Adam, and there is no reason to assume that, because he believed Christ to be the sole source of men’s righteousness, Paul must have regarded Adam equally as being alone responsible for men’s ruin.

We conclude that ‘sinned’ in this clause refers to men’s sinning in their own persons but as a consequence of the corrupt nature inherited from Adam.”

[From Cranfield, C.E.B. *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.]

- In contrast, ponder the comments of **Martin Luther** “The idea of damning the whole world because one man bit into an apple! Equally: The idea of taking a lot of men to heaven because one man once died on the cross! Dogmatics and Apologetics have long ago made a crushing and a detailed reply. Sin and death have one source – Adam; righteousness and life also have one source – the second Adam, Christ. If not – what then? Yes, what then? Only the rationalistic arguments of the moralists, all of whom Paul has crushed already in chapter 2.” (Quoted from Lenski, p.383)
- Let’s dissect this a bit further by observing two concepts under consideration here:

First, the question of guilt. Was Adam’s forensic guilt imputed to all mankind so that at the point of conception the child is guilty & doomed?

Second, the question of depravity or inner corruption. Was Adam’s depravity imputed to us? Nearly all agree at this point that something was

imputed to us. The differences lie in the degree of corruption. Specifically, was the will left free or in total bondage; bondage of the will; i.e. complete inability.

Augustinian Calvinism - Forensic guilt & Total Depravity (complete inability & thus bondage of the will). Fourth century; embraced by both Luther & Calvin; opposed in his day by Pelagius.

Pelagianism - There is no consequence to us from Adam's sin. Every infant is born in a state of spiritual purity without any depravity or corruption and with free will intact.

Semi-Pelagianism - The consequence of Adam's sin is that each child has partial corruption or depravity. There is no forensic guilt imputed and the free will is intact. Observe that this was the view of the Patristic Church Fathers until the time of St. Augustine. Your reading from David Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, "Free Will and Predestination"* exposed you to a wide number of early Church leaders who addressed this subject all landing in what is today called "semi-pelagianism". Excluding Roman Catholicism and Reformed theology, this is, in our day, the view of nearly all other denominations.

Roman Catholicism

Catholic dogma agrees with semi-pelagianism in that it accepts a partial depravity which leaves freedom of the will intact. However, they agree with Augustinianism in that they believe infants inherit forensic guilt from Adam.

What was imputed to us through Adam?

Consider some passages...

*"And so death spread to all men, because **all sinned**."* (Romans 5:12)

*"For as through the one man's disobedience the many **were made sinners**..."* (Romans 5:19)

*"The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity [**avon**; #5771] and transgression [**pasha**; #6588] and sin [**cheta**; #2403], but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'" (Exodus 34:6-7)*

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity [5771]..." (Psalm 51:5)

"The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity [5771], nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity [5771]; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself." (Ezekiel 18:20)

"Repent and turn away from all your transgressions [pesha], so that iniquity [5771] may not become a stumbling block to you." (Ezek 18:30)

The Hebrew terms for "sin" seem to have greater precision of usage than the Greek.

The Hebrew *cheta* (2403) means to "miss the mark", much as the Greek *harmatia*.

The Hebrew *pesha* (6588) means "trespass" or "transgression" and is thereby more serious an offense than *cheta*.

The Hebrew *avon* (5771) has, in the root word from which it comes, the meaning "to writhe", "to be crooked", "distorted", "turned upside down" (see #5753).

Thus, I understand both *cheta* & *pesha* to be things actively done by the sinner, while *avon* is what happens within the sinner as a consequence of the aforesaid action.

Sin thus brings the double trouble of

(1) **Forensic guilt**

(2) **Corruption** (pollution; sickness; also called depravity).

Thus the words to the hymn, Rock of Ages:

Be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure.

Thus, consider what Paul says in Romans 5:13, "*for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.*"

Here he implicitly suggests there is a difference between an active breaking of a command and being sinful. There is a difference between a transgression and having the inner state of sinfulness. There is a difference between the two categories of (1) *cheta* & *pesha*, as what is actively done, and (2) *avon*, a depraved corrupted polluted & twisted sin nature.

This leads to the question, did that which was imputed to us from Adam, involve forensic guilt; as in punishment deserved? If so, how do we "square" this with what Ezekiel 18 says that the punishment due a father shall not be given the son and vice versa?

Consider the strong statement in Ezekiel 18 that a son shall not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity.

"The son shall not (3808) bear (5375) the iniquity (5771) of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20; KJV)

"The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity" (NASV)

#5375; *Lo* or *Loh*; "A particle of negation used to make a positive statement negative or to negate the noun that follows"

#5375; *Nasa*; "to lift up or bear"

Consider how verse 30 implicitly suggests a difference of "category" between *pesha* and *avon*; a difference in category between a trespass and a sinful nature.

"Repent (7725), and turn (7725) from all your transgressions (6588); so iniquity (5771) shall not (3808) be your ruin (4383)." (Ezekiel 18:30; KJV)

"Repent and turn away from all your transgressions (6588), so that iniquity(5771) may not become a stumbling block to you." (NASV)

#7725; *Shuv*; "to turn back or around"

#4383; *Mikhshol*; "stumbling block, cause of falling"

"Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart..." (Ezek 14:4; KJV)

"Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet. I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols..." (NASV)

The description given here of iniquity as a "stumbling block" suggests that it itself is not the trespass or sin. Could there be here a parallel flow of thought with James?

"But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." (1:14,15)

Here, "lust", understood as desire, is not the sin itself. It is however the occasion for stumbling and thus sinning.

Do we have here a simple description of that which is suggested in the Hebrew terms *Cheta*, *Pesha* & *Avon*?

Could it be that "iniquity" (*avon*) is what was passed to us from Adam. Exodus seems strongly to imply this. Indeed, the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is largely based on this understanding of Exodus 34:7.

We each are therefore conceived with a depraved nature. Here is the imputation of iniquity; *avon* (5771). But Romans 5:13 says, "*sin is not imputed when there is no law*". What this may mean is that forensic guilt is not imputed although the consequence of death was applied beginning in the garden.

Under this understanding, the iniquity, or sinful nature inherited from Adam, does not involve forensic guilt until such a time that the one with the imputed sinful nature, actually breaks a command thus transgressing. Life experience strongly suggests to me that this transgression or sin borne out of the inner corrupted nature, takes place at a very early stage of life.

To the degree that these thoughts are Biblical accurate, they represent my understanding of what would be called Semi-Pelagianism. There was corruption or depravity imputed to us when Adam fell. The Hebrew term is *avon*. This does not however, necessitate the imputation of forensic guilt. Such occurs when each individual becomes aware of "law" and trespasses.

Exodus 34:7 & other passages (Exodus 20:5-6; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9 and Jeremiah 31:29-30 all clearly state that the iniquity of the father is *visited* upon the children to the third and fourth generation.

Ezekiel 18 however clearly states that the punishment for iniquity falls only on the one who sinned. A son does not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity.

Clearly then, there is a difference between the category of "visited upon" and "punished for". Iniquity is visited or imputed to us from Adam and through our fathers, but we are not guilty in a forensic sense until we, as an individual, have sinned or trespassed.

Consider now the contrast between the condemning act of Adam and the redemptive act of Christ (Romans 5:6 -21)

Vs 6	the ungodly	Christ died for
Vs 8	sinners	Christ died for
Vs 9	If justified by His blood	Then saved from God's wrath
Vs 10	If reconciled as enemies	Much more shall be saved
Vs 15	By the transgression of the one	By the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ

the many died	the gift of grace abounded to many
Vs 16 One transgression: Judgment Justification & Condemnation	Many transgression: Free gift &
Vs 17 Death reigned thru the transgression of the one righteousness	Life will reign through the One to those who receive the grace gift of
Vs 18 One transgression resulted in condemnation to all men	One act of righteousness resulted in justification of life to all men
Vs 19 Thru the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners	Thru the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous
Vs 20 Law increased transgressions abounding	Increased sin resulted in grace
Vs 21 Sin reigned in death	Grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord

"It might be said that Adam's sinful act, devastating as it was, had but a one-dimensional effect - it brought death to everyone. But the effect of Christ's redemptive act has facets beyond measure, because He not only restores man to spiritual life but gives him the very life of God. Death by nature is static and empty, whereas life by nature is active and full. Only life can abound." (MacArthur, p.303)

There is indeed a unity of theme in the fifth chapter. Observe again the phrase "much more", which occurs twice in verses 1-11 and twice again in verses 12-21. Paul's emphasis here is on the superabundant greatness of Christ and His act over that of Adam and his act. (Lenski)

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

Review:

Romans 1:16-17

The righteousness of God revealed: The Just shall live by faith

Romans 1:18 - 3:20

The wrath of God revealed against all mankind

Romans 3:21 - 4:25

**The righteousness of God revealed,
on the basis of the work of Christ to all who believe**

Romans 5a

This God-righteousness satisfies God's wrath giving us peace with God

Romans 5b

This God-righteousness abundantly transcends Adam's one act of sin

Romans 6

This God-righteousness frees us from sin enslaving us to righteousness

Romans 7

This God-righteousness frees us from law gifting us with grace

Romans 8

This God-righteousness frees us from death giving us hope

Chapter 6 - Free from Sin, enslaved to Righteousness

At this point in the epistle Paul begins a new development in his teaching about salvation and its practical effects on those who are saved.

After extensively discussing man's sin and the redemption offered through Christ, Paul now focuses on the life of holiness versus a continuation in sin.

Here is the question: Whose slave are you? Or... To what are you enslaved?

MacArthur asserts "The phrase '*died to sin*' expresses the fundamental premise of chapter 6" (p 319)

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (6:1-2)

- While hedonism is a danger, most likely, Paul's focus is to correct a misunderstanding of Grace.
- His basic response: How can those who have died to sin still live in it? He then explains this death to sin.

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin." (6:3-7)

- All who've been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death. (vs 3)
- All true Christians have been baptized into Christ Jesus. Indeed, baptism, the very act, pictures this death, burial and resurrection to a new life (vs 4)
- Verse 5 - being united with the likeness of Christ's death is a guarantee of being united in a resurrection like His.
- All Christians not only are identified with Christ but are identified with Him specifically in His death and resurrection.
- Theologian Charles Hodge summarizes saying, "There can be no participation in Christ's life without a participation in his death, and we cannot enjoy the benefits of his death unless we are partakers of the power of his life. We must be reconciled to God in order to be holy, and we cannot be reconciled without thereby becoming holy." (MacArthur, p.322)
- MacArthur quotes Bishop Moule, "We have 'received the reconciliation' that we may now walk, not away from God, as if released from a prison, but with God, as His children in His Son. Because we are justified, we are to be holy, separated from sin, separated to God; not as a mere indication that our faith is real, and that therefore we are legally safe, but because we were justified for this very purpose, that we might be holy.

The grapes upon a vine are not merely a living token that the tree is a vine and is alive; they are the product for which the vine exists. It is a thing not to be

thought of that the sinner should accept justification – and cannot be entertained without betraying an initial error in the man’s whole spiritual creed.” (MacArthur, p.323)

- Fundamental to all this is that the old sinful self has been killed.
- MacArthur’s comments at this point are very important (p. 323).
“When Scripture is compared with Scripture, which responsible study of it always includes, it becomes clear that the ‘old self’ to which Paul refers in Romans 6 is none other than the unregenerate, in-Adam man described in chapter 5, the person who is apart from divine redemption and the new life it brings.

The dualistic view that a Christian has two natures uses unbiblical terminology and can lead to perception that is extremely destructive of holy living. Some who hold such views go to the perverted extreme of the Gnostics in Paul’s day, claiming that because the evil self cannot be controlled or changed and because it is going to be destroyed in the future anyway, it does not much matter what you let it do. It is only ‘spiritual’ things, such as your thoughts and intentions, that are of significance. It is not surprising that in congregations where such a philosophy reigns, immoral conduct among the membership as well as the leadership is common and church discipline is usually nonexistent.”

- Three things stand out in verse 6 of chapter 6...
- **First, our old self was crucified with Christ.** “Our old man, our old state under Adam’s headship, under guilt and in moral bondage, was crucified with Christ”.
- **Second, the goal was that our body of sin might be done away with.** “As every mature Christian learns, the more he grows in Christ, the more he becomes aware of sin in his life... New birth in Christ brings death to the sinful self, but it does not bring death to the temporal flesh and its corrupted inclinations until the future glorification... As Paul explains more fully in chapter 7, a believer’s unredeemed humanness – of which he uses his own as example – remain with him until he is transformed to heavenly glory.”
- It is to combat this remaining residual weakness toward sin, that Paul admonishes believers saying, “Just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (6:19).

- **Third, we should no longer be enslaved to sin.** “In other words, the immediate context of ‘should no longer be slaves of sin’ carries the more precise – and extremely significant – meaning that believers **can** no longer be slaves of sin.
- Paul does not teach that a Christian is no longer capable of committing sin but that he no longer is under the compulsion and tyranny of sin, nor will he dutifully and solely obey sin as he formerly did. **For all genuine Christians, slavery (enslavement) to sin no longer exists, nor do they desire to return to Egypt.**
- The reason for this is verse 7, “*He who has died is freed from sin.*” How is this with you? To what are you enslaved? What do your habits, those things of habitual reoccurrence, reveal?
- MacArthur quotes a brilliant illustration from Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He pictures two adjoining fields, one owned by Satan and one owned by God, that are separated by a road. Before salvation, a person lives in Satan’s field and is totally subject to his jurisdiction. After salvation, a person works in the other field, now subject only to God’s jurisdiction. As he plows in the new field, however, the believer is often cajoled by his former master, who seeks to entice him back into the old sinful ways. Satan often succeeds in temporarily drawing the believer’s attention away from his new Master and his new way of life. But he is powerless to draw the believer back into the old field of sin and death.” (p. 327)

“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (6:8-11)

- If, we’ve died with Christ, through faith which baptism symbolized, then we shall also live with Him.
- Observe the transition: IF/THEN... If died with Christ, then shall live!
- And observe that His death is said to be a death to sin, once for all! Neither sin nor death has any mastery over Christ!

- Therefore... (vs. 11) *“consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus!”*
- *Logizomai* (#3049). Here is the technical term used throughout Romans for God’s reckoning faith for righteousness. In the same way that God imputes Christ’s righteousness and reckons it for us; that is, He considers us as robed in Christ’s righteousness (Isa 61), even so, we are also, on the basis of this dying to sin in Christ through faith, symbolized in baptism, we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus!
- **And here is a major paradigm shift for the Christian.** Stop thinking as the world thinks. Stop thinking of yourself the way the world trains you to think. Reckon yourself literally & spiritually dead to sin and alive to God as His slave!

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (6:12-14)

- Therefore... Do not! Do not! Do you see them? Two prohibitions! Two things to cease and desist from!
- **Do not let sin reign in your flesh!**

*Two natures beat within my breast
One is foul, one is blest
One I love, one I hate
The one I feed will dominate*

What activities am I engaged in that is feeding the desires of my flesh? God says, *“Do not let sin reign in your flesh!”*

- **Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness.**
- The tension surfaces here between what God has already accomplished and the responsibility of His children to obey. They are still tempted by “lust” (NASV) or “passions” (ESV & KJV).

- The word here is *epithumia* (#1939); an active and individual desire resulting from *pathos* (#3806), the diseased or wounded condition of the soul. *Epithumia* is the active lust or desire springing from the diseased soul while *pathos* is the condition.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 uses both saying, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in **the passion (1939) of lust (3806)** like the Gentiles who do not know God...”
- Observe the active nature of this “presenting”. Here is a virtual offering of a gift at a pagan altar. Here is the choice to feed the mind on what your spirit knows you ought not.
- The desire for *food* (hunger) which serves us well, but when sin captures it, the desire becomes gluttony or bulimia or anorexia and it rules us for the sake of the enemy, and our tongue and mouth and stomach become weapons of unrighteousness.
- The desire for *drink* (thirst) which serves us well, but when sin captures it, the desire may become alcoholism or caffeine addiction, and the tongue becomes a weapon of unrighteousness.
- The desire for *sexual satisfaction* which is a good servant of procreation and marriage joy, but if sin captures it, the desire becomes lust for pornography or masturbation or fornication or adultery or homosexual relations, and our sexual organs become the weapons of unrighteousness.
- The desire for *rest and sleep* which serves us well, but if sin captures it, the desire becomes sloth and laziness.

Paul says, “Present your members as instruments of righteousness to God!” How?

You must start saying “No” to sin and “Yes” to righteousness.

What good deed could you do that would meet a need? What spiritual discipline could you undertake that would be a presentation of yourself to God for righteousness sake?

- **Watches of the night...** what do you do with them? Are you prepared?

- **Bible reading, memorization, prayer, intercession, giving of alms** to the poor around you, giving to the needs of the Body of Christ locally and globally...
- What are you engaged in that feeds your flesh and sin in you? Cease.
- *“For sin shall not be master over you! You are not under law, but under grace!”*

*“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become **slaves of righteousness**. 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now **present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification**. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (6:15-23)*

- *“Slaves to righteousness”*; **doulos**... remember the meaning? What impact has this understanding of your relationship to the LORD Jesus Christ had on your day to day, hour to hour life?
- Observe that here we have described the process, the methodology from the human side, of sanctification. *“Present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.”* Observe here the first of two usages of the word sanctification. The next is in verse 22.
- Let’s pull back and consider our theology here:

Sanctification is the subjective work of Christ through the Holy Spirit which follows that objective work of Christ achieved through the imputation of His righteousness procured by His propitiatory sacrifice.

Hence, while justification is objective and external to ourselves, in that the practical effect of it is the imputation of our sin to Christ and of His righteousness to us, thus solving the forensic problem of our standing before the Holy God, sanctification is subjective, being within the man, as the practical outworking of the indwelling presence of God the Spirit results in a more holy man or woman.

While justification deals with our legal standing at the bar of God's holiness, sanctification steadily and with Divine intentionality overcomes the effect of iniquity within the sinner.

- Remember that five chapters on God, sin, and justification have gone before chapter 6.
- Five chapters to help us see why justification by faith is utterly essential as a foundation for victory over sin & death! You don't make yourself holy in order to be justified. You are justified by faith in order to become holy. That is why Romans 1-5 precedes Romans 6. **Your triumph over sin in the body follows Christ's triumph over sin on the cross.**
- Remember that Christ Died for Your Sin. You died & rose with Christ. Your baptism pictured what your faith was gifted with. You thus were united with Christ and now are wrapped in a robe of Christ's righteousness. Therefore think of yourself as dead to sin by learning to say "no" to sin (repentance) and "yes" to righteousness! Change your mental eating habits.
- Observe that "He who supposes that Jesus Christ only lived and died and rose again in order to provide justification and forgiveness of sins for His people has yet much to learn. Whether he knows it or not, he is dishonouring our blessed Lord, and making Him only a half Saviour. The Lord Jesus has undertaken everything that His people's souls require; not only to deliver them from the *guilt* of their sins by His atoning death, but from the *dominion* of their sins, by placing in their hearts the Holy Spirit; not only to justify them, but also to sanctify them. He is, thus, not only their 'righteousness,' but their 'sanctification' (1 Cor. 1:30)." (Holiness, Ryle, p.20)
- J. C. Ryle, in his book, *Holiness*, says, sanctification depends greatly on a diligent use of Scriptural means.

"When I speak of 'means,' I have in view Bible reading, private prayer, keeping of Christian Sabbath, regular hearing of God's word and regular reception of the Lord's Supper. I lay it down as a simple matter of fact that no one who is careless about such things must ever expect to make much progress in sanctification. I can find no record of any eminent saint who ever neglected them. They are appointed channels through which the Holy Spirit conveys fresh supplies of grace to the soul, and strengthens the work which He has begun in the inward man. Let men call this legal doctrine if they please, but I will never shrink from declaring my belief that there are no 'spiritual gains without pains.' I should as soon expect a farmer to prosper in business who contented himself with sowing his fields and never looking at

them till harvest, as expect a believer to attain much holiness who was not diligent about his Bible-reading, his prayers, and the use of his Sundays. Our God is a God who works by means, and He will never bless the soul of that man who pretends to be so high and spiritual that he can get on without them." (*Holiness*, p.25)

- *"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life."* (vs. 22)
- My dear friends, if you have been set free from sin through the grace gift of this God-righteousness, which is Christ's robe of righteousness, there is a Divine expectation: **Live free from your old slavery to sin.**
- And how shall this be done except habits change? Customs change? Movie choices change? Expenditure of discretionary time change? Patterns of entertainment change? How shall you live free from sin if you continue to pander in the Devil's field?
- To daily spend time gazing at the Devil's field, watching, listening, pondering, dreaming about it, is to utterly fail to recognize that you are a slave of God if you are his child. You do not belong to yourself. You have no rights save those He grants and those may be taken away. Your life is not your own to spend as you please on pleasure; on sin. Nay, your life is His to spend as He sees fit.
- MacArthur says, "One of the marks of true salvation is a sense of being ashamed of one's life before coming to Christ. Whether the previous life was marked by sordid immorality or great propriety, by heinous crimes or sacrificial service to others, by extreme selfishness or extreme generosity, it is a life about which the true believer can be nothing but ashamed. No matter how it may appear before the world, the life apart from God is a life apart from righteousness.

John Calvin wrote, "As soon as the godly begin to be enlightened by the Spirit of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, they freely acknowledge that the whole of their past life, which they lived without Christ, is worthy of condemnation. So far from trying to excuse it, they are in fact ashamed of themselves. Indeed, they go farther, and continually bear their disgrace in mind, so that the shame of it may make them more truly and willingly humble before God."

- Finally, consider the two inexorable absolutes the final verse closes with, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (6:23)
- Death, eternal death is earned.
- Eternal life is gifted. It is utterly gratuitous. It is of grace from first to last. There is no boast here save in the Cross of Christ.
- Here is Paul’s great climax to chapter 6: **Jesus Christ is the only way from sin to righteousness, from damnation to salvation, from eternal death to eternal life!**
- Ponder again, Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s words in the *Cost of Discipleship*, “Cheap grace amounts to the justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs.

Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.

Costly grace, on the other hand, is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows Him... When Martin Luther spoke of grace, he always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was not subjected to the absolute obedience of Christ.

- What about the question, then, of sin in the believer’s life?

We are to no longer live as though we are “slaves to sin”; for we no longer are if we are in Christ.

For we are now, in reality, “*slaves of God*” (6:22) and therefore “*slaves to righteousness*” (6:19)! Live accordingly. Plan your lives, your schedules, your evenings, your free time, your budget... accordingly!

Romans 7 Free from Law because of Grace

This God-righteousness, of Christ's & from Christ, frees us from law giving us grace

7:1 Or do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to those who know the law – that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. 4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. 7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. 10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 13 Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (7:1-13)

When Paul announces and unfolds this glorious good news in Romans 1-5, he deals with potential distortion & rejection of the message. For when he says in Romans 3:28, "We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law," and when he says, in 5:20-21, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," there were those rooted in Judaism who said, "Paul you are making grace into license and the Law into sin."

And so Paul writes Romans 6 to defend grace. And he writes Romans 7 to defend God's Law. And that is where we are now.

Romans 7:7: "Is the Law sin?" he asks. Answer: "May it never be!"

But the objector goes on:

"But Paul, consider what you say in verses 9 & 10.

You say, '*I was once alive apart from the Law* [that is, he once had little or no consciousness of sin or condemnation or slavery; he just did what he felt like doing; it seemed like freedom and felt like being alive];
but when the commandment came [perhaps as a child or an adolescent waking up from the obliviousness and freedom of self-centeredness; or perhaps at his conversion seeing for the first time the true nature of his spiritual deadness],

sin became alive [that is, he experienced sin as sin and the rebellion it really was]

and I died [he experienced subjectively the objective reality of his true hopeless condition of slavery to sin, spiritual death];

and this commandment, which was to result in life [the commandments pointed to life, offered life, and couldn't give life – too weak and too powerless],

proved to result in death for me.'

Paul, you said that God's commandment killed you. You make a murderer out of the Law. You make the Law sin.

So Paul continues to explain his meaning in verse 11.

"No," he says in essence, "what I mean is this. When I say that the commandment became death for me, I mean, 'Sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.'

Sin killed me. Sin brought about my deadly condemnation. Sin brought about my experience of spiritual doom. Sin used the commandment of God as the weapon, but sin is the killer."

He concludes in verse 12: "*So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*"

And in verse 13 he repeats in the strongest language possible that sin, not the commandment, killed him.

"Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful."

This is verse 11 all over again: "*Sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.*"

That's not what the Law is for!

Think of the Law as a surgeon's scalpel. It is meant for life and healing. But sin comes and takes the scalpel of God's commandments and kills with it.

The commandment – holy, just & good – was to be to us life, yet it became death, because sin used it to kill me (verse 10). That is not what the law was for.

So why would God allow this?

Paul answers at the end of verse 13: "*so that through the commandment sin would become utterly [=exceedingly, immeasurably] sinful.*"

It is sinful to murder; it is doubly sinful to force innocent people to help you murder. It is sinful to poison a child; it is doubly sinful to trick a mother into giving the poison to her own child. You don't boil a baby goat in its mother's milk. That is not what a mother's milk is for. It is for life, not death. It is sinful to break God's Law; it is doubly sinful to use God's Law to break God's Law.

So the bottom line in Romans 7 is that the reason we must die to the Law is not because the Law is sin, but because we are utterly sinful.

Therefore, the Law cannot be the means of our justification or our sanctification, because "*when the commandment comes*" our sin rises up, comes alive, and uses the commandment to kill us, not save us.

How does sin do that?

Verse 11 gives the key word to explain how sin does this killing through the commandments. "*Sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.*"

Sin uses the commandments to **deceive us**. Fundamentally sin is a lie. Sin is a "*suppression of the truth*" (Romans 1). Sin kills thru deceit and superficial logic.

If you are perishing under the guilt and power of sin, it is because you are being deceived. Sin is lying to you, and you have thus far believed it.

But, you say, how does sin do that with the Law? What deception does sin use when the commandment comes?

Verse 11 says, "*Sin, taking opportunity through the commandment deceived me.*"

On the one hand, sin might say, "You can't keep these commandments, and you wouldn't want to if you could. And so there is no hope for you if there is a holy God, and you may as well get as much pleasure out of life as you can."

Or, on the other hand, sin might say, "You can keep these. Use your willpower and show yourself as good as the next guy."

In other words, sin takes the Law and kills us with one of two kinds of deception about our future. **It either offers hopelessness relieved by self-indulgence, or it offers hopefulness supported by self-righteousness.**

Again: It either offers hopelessness relieved by self-indulgence, or it offers hopefulness supported by self-righteousness.

What is the remedy?

We must die to the Law and live to God through the crucified and risen Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the remedy.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).

It is the only message in the world that gives hope to both the ungodly self-indulgent and the ungodly self-righteous.

It says to the doomed self-indulgent, there is hope for you, because, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, because God will forgive you for Christ's sake, if you will receive him as a treasured gift and penitently trust him.

And the gospel says to the doomed self-righteous, there is true hope for you, because, though your righteousness be as filthy rags, the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ will be credited to your account, if you will receive him as a treasured gift and penitently trust him.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin."

Here is one of the most famous texts in the book of Romans and one of the most controversial. For we have the well-known words of verse 19: "*For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.*"

Here we have a divided man, a divided will, a divided heart. There is the part of him – the "I" – who wants to do good and does not want to do evil. And there is the part of him – the "I" – who does not do the good he wants but does the evil he does not want.

One of the biggest disagreements over this text is who this man is. Whose experience is Paul describing? Is this the experience of Paul, the believer? Or is it the experience of Paul, the unbeliever; Christian or non-Christian?

Or should we pose the question with more precision: Is this a morally awakened but unconverted Paul? Or is this the spiritually quickened regenerated Paul who is new and immature in the faith? Or could this be the mature Christian Paul, but in times of lapsed faith & spiritual struggle?

I believe you can make a case for each of these possibilities and that none of them necessarily leads you into false teaching on the larger, over-all view of sanctification.

In other words, it is possible to be wrong on our interpretation of one text but right in our view of the Christian life.

You might say, "This text is *not* about Christian experience," and still believe that Christians have experiences like this - sometimes doing what we don't want to do.

Or you might say, "This text *is* about Christian experience," and still believe that much more victory over sin is possible than this in the Christian life.

So what we conclude (about whether Romans 7:14-25 refers to Christian experience or not) does not describe our whole view of Christian experience, for there are dozens of other passages in the New Testament that we have to consider to see the bigger picture of the Christian life.

Beware of people who build their views on isolated passages. That is where most cults and false interpretations come from.

The book of Romans is about how sinful mankind (3:9) - who have fallen short of God's glory (3:20), dishonored him with our lives (1:21) deserving of his wrath (1:32; 2:5), are made right with God - that is, are justified on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done in his life, death and resurrection (3:24-25; 5:18-19).

Paul's answer to the greatest human problem - namely, our sinful guilt before a holy and just God - is that God himself, through his Son, Jesus Christ, has provided a righteousness for us that is not our own, but is imputed or reckoned to us through faith alone, not through works.

You see this especially in Romans 4:5-6, "*But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.*"

So you see this enormously important word "credited" - or "reckoned" or "imputed." And at the end of verse 5: "*His faith is credited as righteousness.*" And the end of verse 6: "*God credits righteousness apart from works.*"

The glorious gospel truth of Romans is that God provides a righteousness that is not ours and credits it to us through our faith.

Faith looks away from our own deeds and performances of the Law as a hopeless way to be justified, and trusts in Jesus Christ alone as the basis of God's crediting us with a righteousness not our own; a God-righteousness; Christ's righteousness.

As 3:21 says, "*But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.*"

You can see even more clearly in Romans 10:3-4 whose righteousness this is that justifies us: Speaking of the Jews, Paul says, "*For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*"

What does this "subjecting" of ourselves to the righteousness of God look like today, vs. "establishing our own righteousness"? Paul answers in verse 4 (which says literally), "*For the end (or goal) of the Law [is] Christ for righteousness to everyone who believes.*"

To submit to the righteousness of God, instead of seeking my own, is to realize that the goal of the Law was to lead us to "Christ for righteousness." And that we have "Christ for our righteousness", which is his righteousness by faith.

So when Paul says in Romans 5:19, "*For as through the one man's disobedience [namely, Adam's] the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous,*" I think he means that Christ so obeyed God and his Law that by faith in him and union with him, his obedience, his righteousness, becomes mine.

It is God's righteousness because it consists in keeping God's will perfectly, it is enabled by God, it is accepted to God and it is God's gift to us in Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21, "*[God] made [Christ,] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" In Christ we "*become the righteousness of God.*"

This, God righteousness accomplished by Jesus Christ, is credited to our account the way our sins were credited to his account. The double imputation of Christ.

Friends, this is the glory of the gospel of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of Christ alone, to the glory of God alone. Here is the main thrust of the book of Romans.

But what's the point of chapter seven? How does it fit into this main purpose of Romans? Here's the problem. Along the way, Paul has argued passionately against justification by works of the Law. We do not get right with God by law-keeping, but by faith alone. And in the process he even seemed to say that the Law is part of our problem, not part of our rescue.

For example: Romans 3:20, "*By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*"

Or Romans 3:28, "*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.*" Or, even more shockingly, Romans 5:20, "*The Law came in [God gave the Law at Mount Sinai] so that the transgression would increase.*" That makes the Law sound like the accomplice of sin.

In fact, Paul goes so far as to say that if you want to bear fruit for God - that is, if you want to be sanctified as well as justified - you have to die to the Law. Romans 7:4, "*Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.*" You can't bear fruit for God if you don't die to the Law.

Law-keeping is not the way to bear fruit for God. Being joined to Christ is the only way to bear fruit for God.

Thus, if Christians wind up fulfilling the Law of God (as the law of Christ) it will be only because we have first died to the law and pursued obedience another way, namely, by union with the risen Christ, where we stand completely justified before we make any progress in law-keeping at all.

So the huge question that he has to answer is stated in Romans 7:7, "*What shall we say then? Is the Law sin?*" Or, a little differently in verse 13, "*Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me?*"

With all his might in verses 7 and 13 Paul says, *No! "May it never be!"* "By no means!"

The law is *not* sin; sin exploits the law and uses it. The law is holy, just, and good (verse 12). Nor does the law cause death; sin causes death through what is good, the law (verse 13).

So when Paul is done with Romans 1-7 he has accomplished two great things:

- (1) On the one hand, he has shown that we must die to the law to be accepted by God (justification, 3:28);
- (2) (2nd) He has shown that we must die to the law to bear fruit for God (sanctification, 7:4-6).

And this necessity to die to the law to be justified and sanctified is *not* because the law is sinful. It's because in our dreadfully sinful condition we must have Christ for the ground of our justification, and Christ for the power of our sanctification. The law cannot do what only Christ can do.

So now we are in a position to see why the identity of this divided man in Romans 7:14-25 does not change the main point of the passage.

If the man is a Christian or not a Christian, in either case his misery ("O, wretched man that I am," verse 24) is caused by his indwelling sin, not by the Law. The Law is not sinful. I am sinful.

Three times at least Paul makes this point: Verse 14: "*The Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh.*" Verse 16: "*If I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good.*" Verse 22: "*I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man.*" So the Law is "spiritual" and "good" and a "joy."

Whether we decide that this divided man is a struggling believer or a conscience-quickened unbeliever, Paul's main point is the same: Justification by faith apart from works of the Law (3:28) stands, because it does not imply that the Law is sin.

And sanctification by faith through death to the Law (7:4) stands, because it does not imply that the Law is sin.

When you turn to Christ for justification and when you turn to Christ for sanctification you will *honor* the Law of God, because the goal of that Law is "*Christ for righteousness for all who believe*" (10:4).

And the fruit of love inspired by Christ (7:4) is a fulfillment of the Law (13:10).

O how full and deep is the salvation Christ has provided for us in his life and death! Amen & amen!

This God-righteousness, of Christ's & from Christ, applied now through the Spirit of God, frees us from death, giving us life & hope!

Chapter 8 Free from Death

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (8:1-17)

Here, to the praise & glory of God in Christ Jesus is what John Piper calls, "The Great Eight" of Romans.

The “*therefore*” of verse one indicates that Paul is stating an important summary and conclusion related to his preceding argument.

The “*therefore*” is based first on the exclamation of victory that comes “*through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (7:23-25), which in turn is linked back to 7:6, where the idea of the “*new life of the spirit*” is first mentioned.

But more broadly Paul seems to be summarizing his whole argument about salvation in Christ from 3:21 – 5:21.

The **now** in 8:1 matches the “*now*” in 7:6, showing that the new era of redemptive history has “*now*” been inaugurated by Christ Jesus for those who are “*now*” in right standing before God because they are united with Christ.

But the summary relates further to the whole argument presented in chapters 3, 4 & 5.

No condemnation (8:1) echoes the conclusion stated in 5:1, “*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

It further underscores the stunning implications of the gospel first introduced in 1:16-17.

Here in chapter 8, as Paul immediately explains, there is “*no condemnation*” for the Christian because God has condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son (8:3) to pay the penalty for sin through his death on the cross.

The following verses then show how indwelling sin is overcome through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. In point of fact, there are ten references to the Spirit in verses 4 – 11.

8:2 - The evidence that believers are in Christ is that the power of sin has been broken in their lives by the inner life of the Holy Spirit.

Christians are not lawless. There is a law in Christ Jesus.

But it is something very different than the mere written code engraved in stone. This law is written on the heart.

It doesn't just tell us not to sin; it comes with its own power to break our bondage to sin. And therefore it frees us from death which is the penalty of sin.

It is called in this verse the "*law of the Spirit of life*," because it is nothing less than the Spirit of God himself writing the will of God on our heart so that, as verse 4 says, "*the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk . . . according to the Spirit.*"

So the life of God in the soul of man frees us from the dominion of sin not by stamping our toes when we take a wrong step, but by stamping itself, with His own nature, on our heart and making the divine will the thing we love to do.

The greatest freedom in the world is becoming the kind of person who loves the things God loves.

8:3 explains how God has done this... "*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.*"

Before the Godhead determined that the Spirit should go and free sinners from the power of sin and from the sentence of death, it was first determined that the Son must go and bear the condemnation for sin.

So when the Spirit of God goes forth to free his people from the dominion of sin and the sentence of death, it is not because God has ceased to hate sin, or that he has ceased to be a just Judge.

It's because the just and awesome Judge of the world who hates sin with infinite hatred is so rich in love that he put his Son in our place, crushed Him in divine wrath and secured for us an eternal acquittal by subsequently raising the Incarnate Son of God from the dead.

Behold the perfect harmony and unity in the Holy Triune God!

1. Out of the riches of his love, God the Father determines to save his sinful creation.
2. God the Father covenants with God the Son to stand in their stead under his holy wrath on the cross.
3. And then God the Father turns, as it were, to God the Spirit and says, "Fear not that we are working at cross purposes. By the death of my Son I have acquitted my people of all their sin and taken away their guilt. And now I commission you with all my heart and with all my soul: apply this great purchase to their hearts and strip the chains off their souls."

O, may we see, love, and praise the interweaving of the work of the Triune God in our salvation! God the Father planned it, God the Son purchased it, and now God the Holy Spirit – the very life of God in our soul – applies it, freeing us from the chains of sin that have no place on the soul of one who is redeemed!

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

Observe the phrase in this the 3rd verse, “In the likeness of sinful flesh”.

Lenski says this phrase “is one of those exact Scripture phrases which admit of no change.

‘The likeness of flesh’ would **Docetism**; Christ would then be without real flesh.

‘Sinful flesh” would be **Ebionitism**; Christ would then have had a sinful body.

But “*the likeness of sinful flesh*” is gospel doctrine. Christ assumed our flesh but not its sinfulness.

The likeness of sinful flesh is the flesh without sin...” It is John 1:14 made even more precise; “*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*”

Ponder 8:4, “In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Lenski observes that the older interpreters think that the fulfillment here referred to is accomplished through the imputation of Christ’s merits, while the description of “us, who walk...” refers to sanctification and not to justification.

Christ Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, wrath on sin, thus freeing and empowering us to victoriously pursue sanctification!

Consider verse 9... “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”

With emphasis Paul here places the Christian not in the sphere of the flesh; not in the sphere of the old unregenerate nature.

He says they are to judge themselves, as to whether God’s Spirit is dwelling in them or not.

Lenski says, “This is by no means an intangible criterion. The heart in which God’s Spirit dwells hears and feels the Spirit’s prompting and is moved to follow that prompting by the power which the spirit supplies.

The Spirit is present in his Word, and we hear him in our hearts when his Word is in us and moves us. Only in and through His Word does the Spirit dwell in us, speak to us, impel and control us.

This excludes all autosuggestion, all hearing fictitious, imaginary inward voices. We have the written Word with which to test every inward Word that we have absorbed; and thus the criterion is at once simple, safe, and most sure: see whether God's Spirit is dwelling in you.... And since God's Spirit is the absolute opposite of the old sin power, it is easy to tell who dwells in the house of your heart." (p.510)

"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Corinthians 13:5; ESV)

"Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good." (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; ESV)

Verse 10... *"But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness."*

Every ache and pain, every touch of sickness and weakness is evidence to this effect. Consider the graves of Christians in the cemeteries.

But when we look at Christ in us, there we see "life" indeed, not the spark of physical animation which flickers for a while and then goes out but a newly created inner nature which is itself *zoe*, "life" never to end but to pass into glory.

Verse 11... *"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you."*

Throughout chapters 6 & 7 one question has been left unanswered. What shall finally become of our mortal body (6:12)? Only in 7:25 we have a brief, preliminary answer. Now at last we get more information, and to what we here get Paul adds v. 17 and the significant expression in v. 23!

Lenski says, "The 'if' of reality continues and securely grounds what God will do with our bodies on what he did with the body of Christ."

Our bodies will be raised up to glory! This mortal will put on immortality; death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:53f).

This Spirit who dwells in us is the Spirit of God, of God who raised Jesus from the dead. So strong is the emphasis on this act of God's that Paul repeats and calls God: "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead."

The official name "Christ" is now combined with the personal name "Jesus," for God raised him up as the one who had completed his great redemptive mission.

The glory of this is that victory of Christ's seals the security of God's promise to us to do the same! The mortality and the death shall be swept out of our bodies together with the last trace of the flesh and of sin.

These mortal bodies shall be made alive by Him who raised up Christ's body. These mortal bodies shall be glorified like Christ's body! Praise be to God, we are wholly redeemed, body as well as soul!

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

First, observe that we are not debtors to the flesh anymore! Its terms are immediate and transitory gratification and eternal damnation. But it has no hold on us now. We are no longer enslaved to it. Indeed, we are now slaves of God; slaves of righteousness.

Thus, consider the fullness of verse 13...

"There is a living that brings on death; there is a dying or rather a putting to death that makes alive and keeps alive. The clash in terms is now brought to its climax... The implication is: if you let the doings of the body live you will be killing yourself."

Observe that the "body" is in contrast to "spirit." Indeed, the body is in a way the ally of "the flesh" since our old nature uses the bodily members for drawing, yes, luring us into sin.

Thus it is with our "spirit" that we kill the evil deeds that sin would like to bring about by misusing our eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc... and all the desires in our old nature that need the body and are connected with bodily movements and function, in both sin, and in a sinful, tempting world.

Lenski says, "The combat is a mortal one: we go on living the spiritual life only by killing these vicious deeds that want to destroy our life... And we must keep on doing this killing as long as we are in this body that is prone to sin in this sinful environment."

Indeed, the more the deeds of the body are killed, the more our bodies become the Spirit's temple. Let us not deceive ourselves on this point. The Scriptures honor the body which God created, Christ redeemed and the Holy Spirit now makes the very Holy of Holies, God's temple. Yet, let us clearly understand the dangers that threaten us through our very physical body.

We come now to the final result of justification by faith. Indeed, this is the great consolation section of Romans.

The Consolation of Hope and Divine Assurance (8:18-39)

Observe that Paul began this major section of the letter (5:1 – 8:39) by emphasizing the final hope of believers (5:1-11). Now he concludes with the same emphasis.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

- Observe that in the subjection of the cosmos to futility (corruption) at Adam's fall, there is a close parallel with the thought of Romans 5:12.
- But as there is hope of redemption for believers, so there is promised redemption for the cosmos as well!
- Thus, the sufferings we face here are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed!
- *“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”* (2 Cor 4:16-18; ESV)

Consider verses 26-28...

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- God the Holy Spirit literally intercedes in prayer for us when we do not know what to pray. And His intercession is according to God's perfect will.
- There is probably no safer prayer than the prayer of utter abandoned helplessness. For here the Spirit of God brings His own perfect intercession on our behalf before the Throne of Grace.
- How is it with your prayers? Are they shallow and superficial; filled with temporal interest and appetites? Or are they so deep over things of eternal import that you oft are lost crying out for God to just come and do His perfect will to you, through you and in you?
- Observe the Divine promise of verse 28. Ponder Joseph's words, "*What you meant for evil God meant for good.*" Ponder Job's words, "*Though He slay me yet will I praise Him.*"
- Do I live under the continual awareness of God's Sovereign Providence? Do I live with the constant awareness that behind everything is either His Divine causation or permission?
- How then is it with me in the behavioral issues of anxiety, fear & grumbling?
- Ponder, dear friend, the incredible inner state of peace and joy that we as children of God ought to, indeed, could walk continuously in...

Ponder verses 29 – 30...

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

- Called the "Golden Chain of Redemption"
- Observe that the translation & therefore interpretation of "foreknowledge" is the fulcrum point between two radically diverging theological systems.

- Foreknowledge = *proginosko* (#4267)
- **Calvinism:** Foreknowledge is God's sovereign choice of whom he would love; this made before the creation of the world.
- **Classical Arminianism:** Foreknowledge is *praescientia*; knowledge held beforehand of the yet to be created man or woman.
- Calvinism's understanding of foreknowledge makes God the One who elects who will be saved.
- Jacobus Arminius' understanding of foreknowledge was that God in His omniscience and transcendence above time knows, before creation itself, all things that would happen. Thus God creates, grants and protects the capacity in mankind for "freewill"; apart from Divine Election as a causation.

Ponder Verses 31-39...

The Great Hymn of Security in Christ

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

Not until Paul reaches this point does he apply the objective facts of the Gospel subjectively.

Here the "we" sets in and not until now. Here are the conclusions we ought to draw from the great objective facts of this salvation Christ has secured for us!

The rhetorical question arouses heightened attention as to what ought be said! Then a second rhetorical question is added that reads literally, "*If God for us, who against us?*"

Observe that in verse 32, the argument is that what God has done seals what he will still do. And the idea is not that He has already done the greater and thus will add the lesser; no, it is stronger than that.

The greater with which He began makes it impossible for Him not to add the rest which is only less great! The argument is not merely from the greater to the less but a statement of the impossibility of not completing what God began at so tremendous a cost to Himself. That He spared not His own Son recalls Genesis 22.

Verse 32 rests on God's being for us. Verse 33 & 34 rests on someone being against us. And the answer to all accusations is: "God is He who acquits! Indeed Who has acquitted!"

In the phrase, verse 33, "It is God who justifies", lies the entire doctrine of justification as presented in 3:21ff.

God does not, is not, ignoring the sins we still commit. He pardons them for the sake of Christ! Luther said, "He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers."

Observe the sheer weight of verses 31 - 34...

- God is for us. Who can be against us?
- After not sparing His Son He will certainly give us all things needful!
- For it is God Who has declared us "righteous"... "justified"!
- And it is God the Son at the right hand of God the Father interceding for us!

In verse 35 another set of dangers assail us, not with judicial assaults, but with earthly assaults the purpose of which is to separate us from God's saving love.

These are not theoretical questions. They are century after century pressed out of the hearts of those who are persecuted and even martyred for Christ's sake.

There is a natural order in the seven things named:

(1st) Tribulation - a feeling of pressure

(2nd) Anguish - narrowness of room

(3rd) Persecution - pursuit or persecution by enemies

(4th) Hunger

(5th) Nakedness or lack of clothing when one has to flee

(6th) Peril & sword - *makaira*, a short sword used by the Roman soldier; thus meaning that the pursued martyr is finally caught.

Observe, how verse 36 supports entirely this interpretation. "*For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*" Here the NIV is woefully weak, "*For your sake we face death all day long...*"

When these things come upon one for Christ's sake, they certainly do not look like the tender caresses of love. And yet, with such things does God usher His beloved ones into eternal comfort, rest and bliss.

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Chapters 9 - 11 Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

Lenski observes that "Augustine found his predestinarianism in chapter 9. Calvin also stressed this doctrine and led many to follow him and darkened the understanding of the vital statements of this chapter for many others. An adequate interpretation of Romans necessarily examines also the Calvinistic and the Calvinizing exegesis that is so contrary to God's righteousness by faith alone." (p. 580-581)

Consider first the incredible "Christ deifying" words of 9:5

Strong translations affirming Christ's deity

"To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." (ESV)

"From them, by physical descent, came the Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen." (HCSB)

"Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen." (NIV)

"Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen." (NKJV)

Weaker translations

"From whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." (NASV)

"Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (KJV)

Now, observe the formidable statement by God in 9:15-18,

“For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.”

“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy” means, “I will not demand works,” v.11, for then no mercy would ever be shown, for no man is able to furnish the necessary works. The extending of mercy must necessarily emanate solely from Him who offers the mercy.

Mercy and compassion are called out by the wretched condition of those who have lost everything and are plunged into ruin & despair. In God both mercy and compassion are attributes in perfection. Praise be to God.

Lenski says, “Calvinism disregards this. It has God extend mercy and pity to only a few of the wretched and lost. For the great mass of the wretched God has no mercy, no pity but only judgment, damnation. Mercilessly, pitilessly he lets them perish in their wretchedness, yea, decrees that they shall so perish. In the mercy and the pity a peculiar sovereignty is substituted for the blessed quality which makes each what it really is in God, the response of his nature to man’s wretchedness and not at all an answer to man’s works... (p.608)

Lenski continues to say, “Calvinism takes these words to mean that God intended to show mercy and pity only to a few who were chosen by him in an absolute way. The fact that such a sovereignty in God would be the very embodiment of unrighteousness and injustice is brushed away by simple Calvinistic denial and by such pleas as that God owes nothing to the non-elect.” (p.609)

“The true sovereignty in connection with God’s mercy and pity is that he extends it to whomever he will, unhampered, unrestricted by limits that men may set up, undisturbed by charges of injustice that men’s foolish reasoning may prefer. In this blessed sovereignty he shapes what he will do so that the sweet purpose of mercy and of pity will be attained to the utmost among men...

There is no sovereignty that restricts mercy and pity in God, no sovereignty that places mercilessness and pitilessness for all the rest beside mercy and pity for a few. There is only a sovereignty that overthrows restrictions such as men think should be set up by works, etc., of theirs or by secret eternal decrees of God.” (p. 609)

I think that the best understanding of 9:16 is to lay John 1 alongside it...

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

This mercy is of God alone, his seeing our utter helplessness, wretchedness and misery, His letting his heart go out to us in mercy. Our woeful state and nothing else in us or done by us moves him. Oh, that we would understand mercy aright, would recognize that it is all ‘of him that has mercy’! How we should then in gratitude drink in that pure, sweet mercy!” (p.611)

But what of verses 17 & 18?

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.”

Here Calvinists find the proof that God’s sovereignty allows him to do as he pleases: save one, damn another. But all assertions of sovereignty, no matter how strong, prove nothing as to the righteousness or unrighteousness of that sovereignty.

The fact that God is righteous is axiomatic and settled as such in verse 13. The asserting of a sovereignty that is merciful to some and merciless and pitiless to others does not prove righteousness, in fact, it does the opposite.

But a sovereignty that extends gratuitous promises and asks for no works (v 11), that extends pure mercy and asks for no willing or running and looks only to our wretchedness (v 16), needs only to be seen as what it is, and every thought of unrighteousness will perish before it is even uttered. (Lenski, p.612)

“For this reason the word addressed to Pharaoh is placed beside the word spoke to Moses. Pharaoh and Moses belong together: the mediator of the initial great fulfillment of the promise, mercy, and pity, and the tyrant who sought to block this initial fulfillment.

Not only did God bring about that fulfillment in spite of this tyrant... He made the very wickedness of this tyrant reveal to all the world throughout all future generations the sovereign power and glory of His Name, and of His power to save.

Lenski says, “Ten times Exodus reports that Pharaoh hardened himself; then, only in consequence of this self-hardening, we read ten times that God hardened this self-hardened man... The door of mercy is not shut at once on the self-hardened so that they crash into the locked door with a bang... God’s mercy closes it gradually and is ready to open it wide again at the least show of repentance in answer to his mercy; and not until all the warnings of the gradually closing door are utterly in vain does the door sink regretfully into its lock.” (p.617)

Ponder His words to Elijah concerning Ahab's repentance...

Observe that Pharaoh hardened his heart progressively; only then does God's hardening set in (Ex 9:12).

The history of the hardening certainly speaks for itself.

On face value Romans the 9th Chapter appears to present a Cause & Effect modality, and is often referred to as doing just this. But does it?

Consider the event from which it quotes in Exodus 4-9. Ponder the hardening of Pharaoh's heart from the simple standpoint of who is said to be the causative agent.

	<i>Pharaoh</i>	<i>God</i>	
<i>Prediction 4:21</i>		X	<i>(future tense)</i>
<i>Prediction 7:3</i>		X	<i>(future tense)</i>
<i>1st Plague Blood 7:23</i>	X		
<i>2nd Plague Frogs 8:15</i>	X		
<i>3rd Plague Gnats 8:19</i>	X ?		
<i>4th Plague Flies 8:32</i>		X	
<i>5th Plague Cattle 9:7</i>	X ?		
<i>6th Plague Boils 9:12</i>		X	
<i>7th Plague Hail 9:34-35</i>	X		
<i>8th Plague Locust 10:20</i>		X	
<i>9th Plague Darkness 10:27</i>		X	
<i>10th Plague Death 14:8</i>		X	

It is frightenly somber to ponder the nature of God's dealing with Pharaoh. Here I believe Classical Arminianism, is perhaps best postured to explain what took place here.

For the Calvinist sees God in His Sovereignty as the causative agent behind the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

The Arminian typically struggles with these indications that God is actually hardening someone's heart.

Classical Arminianism, embracing the Reformed (not Calvinist) concept of God's Sovereignty, sees God prophesying of what will take place, but not because He is forcing this on Pharaoh.

Instead God presents the scenario, the testing place, to Pharaoh, knowing fully what choice Pharaoh will make.

Pharaoh, uncoerced, with free will, hardens his own heart at each of the first 3 plagues.

God reciprocates hardening Pharaoh's heart at the 4th Plague of flies (8:32).

God then judges with the 5th Plague of cattle, and the Scripture says simply, *"But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened..."* not telling who was responsible for this hardening.

God then judges with the 6th Plague of boils. We are told *"and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart..."* (9:12)

God then judges with the 7th Plague of hail, apparently removing Divine causation and waiting to see Pharaoh's response for we are told in 9:34 & 35, *"But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart..."*

At this point God's hand releases the 8th, 9th & 10th Plagues, each time in swift succession God Himself hardening Pharaoh's heart...

"But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go." (10:20)

"But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go." (10:27)

"And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly." (14:8)

From these and many other passages, I believe the best doctrinal understanding that embraces all the passages bearing on this topic, is to view God operating in both a 'Cause & Effect' and an 'Influence & Response' modality.

I suspect the more one rebels against God and His will, the more of a 'Cause & Effect' posture God takes. In like manner, the more one moves toward the Maker through the redemption & sanctification offered in Christ, the more God adopts an 'Influence & Response' posture; as with a friend, a beloved & mature son or daughter.

Consider now verses 19-23

"You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory..."

Lenski says, "Calvinism finds its peculiar sovereignty of God in this verse: **supralapsarian** Calvinism, the sovereignty which created some men to fall and to be damned and other men to be saved despite the fall, both according to an absolute decree; **infralapsarian** Calvinism, the sovereignty which from the same fallen lump of humanity decreed and shaped some to salvation and decreed and shaped some to damnation. Such a sovereignty which is contrary to God's very nature as *agape* does not exist.

The problem using this passage and its reference to Pharaoh is that the figure of the potter and the clay could not picture the self-hardening of Pharaoh and of the Jews in permanent obduracy against God's mercy, which self-hardening called forth God's judicial hardening.

But consider verse 22...

"So immense is the mercy of God, so intense his purpose to make known its riches to men by living examples in order to draw them to this mercy, that he puts off his wrath and his power and the destruction which these must visit on the obdurate....

When men are ripe for judgment, God has the will to strike them down for judgment; yet he delays this in the interest of his grace. Foolish men may think that his threats of judgment are not serious; God is willing to run that risk. Displaying his grace is supreme to Him.

The judgment upon Judas was delayed; Jesus warned him to the last. His end is a warning for all time, but his traitorousness served only to work out Christ's redemptive death. The Jews who rejected and crucified Christ were surely fit for destruction, but God delayed for forty years before he wiped out their nation as a nation and displayed his wrath and his power. And during that entire time his mercy built up the church out of Jews and Gentiles so that the glory of that mercy might be seen by the world. (p.623)

"What a triumph of God's mercy! He who exercises such mercy and exercises it to such a degree and to such an extent - can one find fault with him when he judicially hardens those who are adamantly obdurate against such mercy, find fault with him for his blaming those who are hardened thus because in the end they cannot withstand the punitive judicial hardening they have brought upon themselves despite all his mercy?" (p. 626)

Big picture...

Divine Sovereignty - Chapter 9

Human Responsibility - Chapter 10

"For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (10:3)

"Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." (10:9, 10)

"But of Israel he says, 'All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'" (10:21)

God's Sovereign Purposes (11:1-32)

Doxology to God's Sovereignty (11:33-36)

Addendum A

Middle Knowledge

The underlying truth resolving the paradox of Divine Sovereignty & human responsibility

1. The Omniscience of God

A. Natural knowledge

- Here is the category of necessary truths based on God's very being or nature. They are what of necessity would have to be in any world He should create.

B. Free knowledge

- Here is the category of contingent truths based on things not necessary but nevertheless true, actualized, things known beforehand which will become fact in the world He creates.
- From the standpoint of this world and this time, here is included all things past, present & future.

C. Middle knowledge

- Here is the category of all possibilities, which might have been, but will never be actualized in the world He would create.
- These 'facts' (never actualized; never reality) are called 'counterfactuals'.
- Illustrated by Chess & the *Shannon Number*.
- Scriptural examples: 1 Samuel 23:6-10; Matthew 11:21-24; 26:24; Jeremiah 38:17-18
- Was it chance or Providence that your great-grandfather saw, one day, your great-grandmother? Suppose one tiny part of that encounter had been different?
- Middle knowledge is the unrecognized assumption Christian's make when they ask God for guidance in prayer.

2. Middle knowledge explained

- God, in His omniscience, prior to the creation, looked ahead (as it were) though He knows all in one eternal now.
- His knowledge included all things that of necessity must be. This we call His **Natural knowledge**. Examples:
 - (1) All possible worlds He might create would have the same moral law as it is but His very nature manifested through the created realm.
 - (2) All possible worlds would be a manifestation of the One & the Many or Unity & Diversity, as this is rooted in the Maker's very nature.
 - (3) All possible worlds would be based on the Law of non-contradiction; that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time & in the same way.

- His knowledge included all things contingent yet actual. This we call His **Free knowledge**. This category would not out of necessity exist, but would in actuality be called into existence. Thus He foreknew that The Lamb would be slain before the foundation of the world. This would be. But it did not out of necessity have to be. He could have just manifested justice only and thus wrath on sinners. Further examples:
 - (1) The actual number of hairs you would have at age X.
 - (2) The date, time, location & age of every sparrow that dies.
 - (3) God’s sovereignty means there is no ‘thing’ that surprises Him. There is no category of chance that creeps up on Him.
- Between these two categories of things known before the creation is **Middle knowledge**. This is knowledge of all things possible in all possible worlds but which would never be actualized in the world He would create. Thus He knew ALL things that would have been possible about all possible worlds. He also knew ALL things possible but which would never be actualized in the world He would create.
 - (1) All things that would have happened if your grandfather had married another woman.
 - (2) All things that would have been if you had been born with a congenital disease.
 - (3) All things that would have been if Hitler & the Third Reich had conquered in WW II.
- The understanding of God’s Middle knowledge being between His Natural knowledge & His creative decree of the cosmos is crucial. For if God’s Middle knowledge was after creation, then God would be actively causing what each individual chooses thus destroying libertarian freedom. By placing Middle knowledge (& thus all counterfactuals) before the creation allows for a harmonization of the two seeming polar opposites of Divine Sovereignty & human responsibility. For the placement of Middle knowledge logically after Natural knowledge, but before the creation gives God the possibility to survey all possible worlds and actualize only one. Thus God’s sovereignty is retained in harmony with human responsibility.
- Ponder how Calvinism’s ‘Compatibalism’ harmonizes with Middle knowledge!

3. Historical context

- Also called **Molinism** after the 16th Century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina, who first developed this Biblical understanding of how the omniscience of God with human free will could be reconciled.
- Two prominent examples of evangelical Christian philosophers from both “sides” who embrace Middle Knowledge: William Lane Craig (not Reformed) & Alvin Plantinga (Reformed)

Addendum B

Doctrinal Applications from Hodge's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*

Doctrinal application from 1:1-17

1. The ministerial office, by way of extrapolation from Paul's opening description of the apostolic office is taught the following: Ministers are the slaves of Christ, deriving their authority from Him and not the people. The call on a Minister is to preach the gospel, all other avocations being made subordinate to that call. The object of their "being set apart" is to bring men to the obedience of faith. Their field is all nations. Their purpose is the honour of Christ.
2. The gospel is contained in rudimentary form in the Old Testament. It was "the soul of the old dispensation", vs. 2.
3. Christ is at once God and man; son of David; Son of God, vs. 3-4.
4. Christ is called the Son of God with reference to His Divine nature. The name Jesus speaks of His humanity. The name Christ speaks of His Deity.
5. Christ is the proper object of prayer, vs. 7.
6. Christ is the Mediator through whom our prayers and thanksgiving must be presented to God, vs. 8.
7. Ministers are bound to preach the gospel to all men, rich and poor, wise and foolish. For it is equally adapted to all, vs. 14-15.
8. The power of the gospel lies not in its pure theism, or perfect moral code, but in the Cross, in the doctrine of justification by faith in a crucified Redeemer Who was & is God in the flesh, vs. 17ff.
9. The one who rejects the doctrine of justification by faith, rejects the gospel. His whole method of salvation must be different from that of the apostles.

Doctrinal application from 1:18-32

1. The punitive justice of God is an essential attribute of His nature. This attribute renders the punishment of sin necessary, and is the foundation of the need of a vicarious atonement in order to pardon sinners. This doctrine is here assumed as the first principle, the very ground of the entire doctrine of justification. (vs.18)
2. That sin is a proper object of punishment, and that, under the righteous government of God, it will be punished, are moral axioms, which have "a self-evidencing light." (vs.18, 32)
3. God has not left Himself without a witness among His rational creatures. Both in reference to His own nature and to the rule of duty, he has, in his works and in the human heart, given sufficient light to render the impiety and immorality of men inexcusable. (vs. 19, 20, 32)
4. If the sins of the heathen, committed under the light of nature, be inexcusable, how great must be the aggravation of those committed under the light of the Scriptures? (vs.20)

5. As the light of nature is insufficient to lead the heathen to God and holiness, it is one of the most obvious and urgent of our duties to send them the light of the Bible. (vs. 20-23)
6. Error has its root in depravity. Men are ignorant of God and duty, because they do not like to retain Him in their knowledge nor given Him thanks. (vs.21, 28)
7. God often punishes one sin by abandoning the sinner to the commission of others. This Paul repeats three times in vss 24, 26 & 28. This judicial abandonment is consistent with God's holiness and the free agency of man. God does not impel or entice to evil. He ceases to restrain. He says of the sinner, "Let him alone". (vs. 24-28)
8. Men should remember that their security from open and gross sins is not in themselves, but in God; and they should regard as the worst of punishments, his withdrawal from them of His Holy Spirit. (vs. 24-28; Psalm 51)
9. Sins of uncleanness are peculiarly debasing and demoralizing. To be preserved from them is mentioned in Scripture as a mark of the Divine favour; Eccl 7:26; Prov 22:14; to be abandoned to them, as a mark of reprobation.
10. The true religion is the only true foundation, the only effective safeguard for morality both individually and culturally. Those who abandon God, He abandons. Irreligion and immorality have ever been found irreparably connected. (vs.24-28)
11. The encouragement of sin in others, reveals a greater depravity in the encourager than in the one who simply commits the sin himself. So again, to take pleasure in those who do good, makes us better; as to delight in those who do evil, is the surest way to become even more degraded than they are themselves. (vs.32)
12. The most reprobate sinner carries about with him a knowledge of his just exposure to the wrath of God. Conscience can never be entirely shut down. (vs.32)

Doctrinal Application from 2:1-16

The primary doctrine here is that God is just. His judgments are infinitely removed above all those disturbing causes of ignorance and partiality, by which the decisions of men are so oft perverted. (2:1,16)

1. The refuge which men are always disposed to seek in their supposed advantages of religious connection, as belonging to the true Church, is a vain refuge. God deals with men according to their character and relationship to God the Son. (2:2-3)
2. The deceitfulness of the human heart is strikingly exhibited in the judgments which men pass upon themselves and others; condemning in others what they excuse in themselves. (2:1-3)
3. The goodness of God has the design to lead men to repentance. If it fails, the fault is not God's. How does the goodness of God affect us? If it does not lead us to repentance, it will harden our hearts and aggravate our condemnation. (2:4,5)
4. Genuine repentance is produced by the discovery of God's mercy; legal repentance by fear of His justice. (2:4)
5. How vain the hope of future blessedness, indulged by the immoral, founded upon the expectation either that God will not deal with them according to their works, or that the secrets of their hearts will not be discovered. (2:6-10, 16)

6. The responsibility of men being very different in this world, their rewards and punishment will, in all probability, be very different in the next. Those who knew not their Lord's will, shall be beaten with few stripes. And those who are faithful in the use of ten talents, shall be made rulers over ten cities. (2:9,10)
7. The heathen are not to be judged by a revelation of which they never heard. But as they enjoy a revelation of the divine character in the works of creation (1:19, 20), and of the rule of duty in their own hearts (2:14,15), they are inexcusable. They can no more abide the test by which they are to be tried, than we can stand the application of the severer rule by which we are to be judged. Both classes, therefore, need a Saviour. (2:12)
8. The moral sense in man is an original part of our constitution, and not the result of education. (2:14)
9. If God is a just God, His wrath will not be escaped by evasions, but only by that way He has appointed. If we have no righteousness of our own, we must seek that way appointed; the Saviour. (2:1-16)
10. He who died for the sins of all mankind is to sit in judgment upon sinners. This is a just ground of fear to those who reject His offered mercy, and of confidence to those who trust in His righteousness. (2:16)

Doctrinal Application from 2:17-29

1. Membership in the true Church, considered as a visible society, is no security that we shall obtain the favour of God. The Jews, before the advent, were members of the true and only Church, and yet Paul teaches that they were not on this account the more acceptable to God.
2. Mere knowledge cannot commend us to God. It neither sanctifies the heart, nor of itself renders men more useful. When made the ground of confidence, or the fuel of pride and arrogance, it is perverted and destructive, vs. 18-20.
3. Superior knowledge enhances the guilt of sin, and increases the certainty, necessity, and severity of punishment, without in itself increasing the power of resistance. It is, therefore, a great mistake to make knowledge our sole dependence in promoting the moral improvement of men, vs. 18-20.
4. The sins of the professing people of God, are peculiarly offensive to him, and injurious to our fellow-men, vs. 22-24.
5. Here, as in the former part of the chapter, the leading idea is, that God is just. He asks not whether a man is a Jew or a Gentile, a Greek or barbarian, bond or free, but what is his character? Does he do good or evil? vs. 17-21.
6. According to the apostle, the true idea of a sacrament is not that it is a mystic rite, possessed of inherent efficacy, or conveying grace as a mere *opus operatum*; but that it is a seal and sign, designed to confirm our faith in the validity of the covenant to which it is attached; and, from its significant character, to present and illustrate some great spiritual truth, ver.25.
7. All hopes are vain which are founded on a participation of the sacraments of the Church, even when they are of divine appointment, as circumcision, baptism, and the Lord's supper; much more when they are of human invention, as penance, and extreme unction, vs.26,27.

8. Religion and religious services, to be acceptable to God, must be of the heart. Mere external homage is of no account, vs.28,29.

Doctrinal Application from 3:1-8

1. The great advantage of the Christian over the heathen world, and of the members of a visible ecclesiastical body over others not so situated, is the greater amount of divine truth presented to their understandings and hearts, vs.2.
2. We should feel the peculiar responsibilities which rest upon us as the inhabitants of a Christian country, as members of the Christian Church, and possessors of the word of God; as such, we enjoy advantages for which we shall have to render a strict account, vss. 1, 2.
3. It is a mark of genuine piety, to be disposed always to justify God, and to condemn ourselves.
4. There is no better evidence against the truth of any doctrine, than that its tendency is immoral. And there is no greater proof that a man is wicked, than his condemnation is just, than that he does evil that good may come, vs.8.

Doctrinal Application from 3:9-20

1. As God regards the moral character in men, and as we are all sinners, no one has any reason to exalt himself over another. With our hands upon our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, we must all appear as guilty before God, vs.9.
2. However men may differ among themselves as to individual character, as to outward circumstances, religious or social, when they appear at the bar of God, all appear on the same level. All are sinners, and being sinners, are exposed to condemnation, vs. 9.
3. To be prepared for the reception of the gospel, we must be convinced of sin, humbled under a sense of its turpitude, silenced under a conviction of its condemning power, and prostrated at the footstool of mercy, under a feeling that we cannot satisfy the demand of the law, that it every saved, it must be by other merit and other power than our own, vs. 20).

Doctrine (3:21-31; from Hodge)

1. The evangelical doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine of the Old, no less than of the New Testament, vs. 21.
2. Justification is pronouncing one to be just, and treating him accordingly, on the ground that the demands of the law have been satisfied concerning him, vs.24-26.
3. The ground of justification is not our own merit, nor faith, nor evangelical obedience; not the work of Christ in us, but his work for us, i.e. his obedience unto death, vs.25.
4. An act may be perfectly gratuitous as regards its object and at the same time proceed on the ground of a complete satisfaction to the demands of the law. Thus justification

is gratuitous, not because those demands are unsatisfied, but because it is granted to those who have no personal ground of recommendation, vs.24, 26.

5. God is the ultimate end of all his own acts. To declare his glory is the highest and best end which he can propose for himself or his creatures, vs.25.
6. The atonement does not consist in a display to others of the divine justice. This is one of its designs and results; but it is such a display only by being a satisfaction to the justice of God. It is not a symbol or illustration, but a satisfaction, vs. 26.
7. All true doctrine tends to humble men and to exalt God; and all true religion is characterized by humility and reverence, vs.27.
8. God is a universal Father, and all men are brethren, vs.29, 30.

Further “Remarks”

1. As the cardinal doctrine of the bible is justification by faith, so the turning point in the soul's history, the saving act, is the reception of Jesus Christ as the propitiation for our sins, vs.25.
2. All modes of preaching must be erroneous, which do not lead sinners to feel that the great thing to be done and done first, is to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and to turn unto God through him. And all religious experience must be defective, which does not embrace distinctly a sense of the justice of our condemnation, and a conviction of the sufficiency of the work of Christ, and an exclusive reliance upon it s such, vs.25.
3. As God purposes his own glory as the end of all that he does, so ought we to have that glory as the constant and commanding object of pursuit, vs.25.
4. The doctrine of atonement produces in us its proper effect, when it leads us to see and feel that God is just; that he is infinitely gracious, that we are deprived of all ground of boasting; that the way of salvation, which is open for us, is open for all men; and that the motives to all duty, instead of being weakened, are enforced and multiplied, vs.25-31.
5. In the gospel all is harmonious: justice and mercy, as it regards God; freedom from the law, and the strongest obligations to obedience, as it regards men, vs.25, 31.