The Epistle of Paul to the ROMANS

Salutation

1 [1]Paul, a slave[1] of Jesus Christ, a called apostle,[2] having been set apart to the Gospel of God, [2]which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures:[3] [3]concerning His Son, who became a physical descendant of David,[4] [4]who was established to be God's powerful Son (in accordance with Spirit of holiness[5]) by resurrection from the dead[6]—Jesus Christ our Lord—[5]through whom we have

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[1] All human beings are slaves—we are born that way, live that way, die that way. As the Lord Jesus said, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin… if the Son makes you free you will be free indeed" (John 8:34,36). Sovereign Jesus offers us a choice of owner: the only way to escape slavery to sin is to become a slave of Jesus Christ (and He will be doing us a favor. Consider Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know the way of man in not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps". It is a matter of relationship with Jesus.) I am one too. But that is not all. We are limited on all sides: language, culture, moment in history, where we were born, even our body (without wings we can't fly, etc.).

[2] Apostles are not ordained by man; they are designated by God, who has a reason for doing so. In the case of Paul, it was "to promote obedience of faith among all ethnic nations" (verse 5). Paul gives the signs of an apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:12. Here in Brazil we have a plague of self-declared 'apostles', who are therefore not legitimate. Elders and deacons are ordained by men; apostles are not. An 'apostle' who knows neither the Scriptures nor the power of God is obviously a farce. For more please see 'When is an apostle?' on my website: www.prunch.org.

[3] The promise begins in Genesis 3:15, and reappears in passages like Genesis 12:3, 28:14, 2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7. The "Holy Scriptures" here refer to the Old Testament.

[4] Literally, 'of the seed of David according to the flesh'. Jesus' body contained genes from David that came through His mother Mary, a descendant of David's son, Nathan (Luke 3:31) (and presumably still does, at the Father's right hand). Joseph could not be His father because he was a descendent of Jehoiakim and Jeconiah, and Jehovah had decreed that none of their descendants could ever sit on David's throne.

Isaiah 9:7 makes clear that the Messiah will occupy the throne of David: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgement and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." See also 2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 11:10 and Micah 5:2.

[5] Since there is no article with 'spirit', I take it as a title, so all three persons of the Trinity are in this verse.

[6] A 'mere' human cannot decide to rise from the dead; Jesus had this authority, as He affirms in John 10:17-18—"My Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." The cross did not kill Jesus; He dismissed His spirit. When He resurrected, He demonstrated that He was "God's powerful Son".

Colossians 1:18 says that "He was the firstborn from among the dead". This is an interesting (even if unpleasant) figure of speech; death is viewed as a huge womb, pregnant with all the deceased, and Jesus was literally the first one out, the first one to be 'born', the first one to resurrect with a glorified body. He was the first, but only the first! Because He conquered death, we can also escape that 'womb'.

received grace and apostleship to promote obedience of faith among all ethnic nations concerning His name[1] 6(among these you also are called by Jesus Christ); 7to all the called saints[2] who are in Rome, beloved of God: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.[3]

To Gentiles

Paul has been hindered from visiting Rome

8First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.[4] 9Further, the God whom I serve with my spirit[5] in the Gospel of His Son is my witness, how without ceasing I always remember you in my prayers, 10begging that perhaps now, at last, I may be prospered by the will of God to come to you.[6] 11For I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—12that is, that I may be encouraged among you by our mutual faith,[7] both yours and mine.

13I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), in order that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the rest of the Gentiles.[8] 14I am a debtor[9] both to Greeks and to non-Greeks, both to wise and to

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1 One's name represents his person—the obedience of faith is to be directed toward the person of Jesus Christ. Now then, surely Paul received an extraordinary job, or charge, and by means of the translation of his epistles he continues to reach ethnic nations. But how about us? Does not some of that obligation come down to us? Using the internet and modern technology we can reach the world. [My website, www.prunch.org, has been accessed by people in 182 countries.]

2 They were called to be saints.

3 Where 'Lord' occurs without the definite article, as here, I usually render 'Sovereign'; with either 'the' or 'our' I usually render 'Lord'. This text clearly presents the Father and the Son as distinct persons, due to the rules of Greek grammar. In John 8:18 Jesus declared that He and the Father were distinct witnesses.

4 Not bad. (I confess that I do not understand this statement very well, but he was trying to establish some rapport—he had never been there.)

5 In Romans 7:14-25 Paul describes the conflict between the two natures. Obviously the 'old man' will not serve God; it is the 'new man', with the spirit.

6 What we think we want is not always what God wants.

7 To see someone established in the mutual faith is a genuine encouragement.

8 'Gentiles' and 'ethnic nations' are renderings of the same Greek noun; the choice is governed by the context, but that choice is often difficult. The reader should keep the two options in mind. An ethnic nation is defined by its language and culture, when these are different from those of any other nations.

9 Why was Paul a debtor to people he had never seen? He had the cure for their ills, and a command from God. We too are debtors. Blessing and privilege are like a coin; on the other side there is corresponding responsibility and account giving. In John 7:38 the Lord Jesus said: "The one believing into me, just as the Scripture has said, out from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water", and in the next verse John explains that the reference is to the Holy Spirit. I believe that the 'Scripture' is Ezekiel 47:1-12, and principally verse 9, where the Hebrew Text has "two torrents". Living water takes life and health wherever it goes. So how much living water is flowing out of me, or you?

foolish. **15**So, for my part, I am eager to preach the Gospel to you who are in Rome as well.

Faith

16I am not ashamed[1] of the Gospel of Christ,[2] because it is the power of God for the salvation of each one who believes[3] (for the Jew first, then the Greek); **17**because in it God's righteousness is revealed,[4] from faith to faith; just as it is written: "The righteous one will live by faith."[5]

Unrighteousness

18Now the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of the people who suppress the truth by unrighteousness,[6] **19**precisely because what may be known about God is

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[1] Where did Paul get the idea of 'shame'? A world controlled by Satan does all it can to cow any who dare to proclaim the Truth. The Roman world was difficult, and Paul suffered. Today the world is becoming increasingly anti-Christian and against biblical values. However, to succumb to the pressure is not a valid option. Revelation 21:8 says: "But as for the cowardly and unbelieving, yes sinners, and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters, and all who are false, their portion is in the Lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Does it surprise you to see 'cowardly' in such a nasty list?

In Matthew 10:32-33 we read: "Now then, everyone who will confess me before the people, I will also confess him before my Father who is in the heavens. But whoever should deny me before the people, I will also deny him before my Father who is in the heavens." See also Luke 12:8-9 and 1 John 2:23. If Jesus denies us before the Father, what are our chances? Presumably the Lord was referring to our attitude when faced with opposition or persecution, including within the academic community. Whoever succumbs to the pressure and denies the Lord will be left out. Consider also James 4:17: "Therefore, to the one knowing to do good and not doing it, to him it is sin". The sin here is of omission, perhaps harder to recognize than sins of commission.

[2] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "of Christ", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[3] The Gospel is the power for the salvation. As the Lord Jesus said in John 14:6—"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." There are not many ways, only one. Obviously the Gospel of Jesus Christ is exclusive, and that goes against the relativism in the world. The Truth is not democratic, is not determined by opinion or vote; the Truth **is**, and has an Owner. If there is only one known remedy for a certain disease, is the one who has that remedy being exclusive?

[4] How does the Gospel reveal God's righteousness? Justice demands payment, and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Sin results in two deaths: the physical and the spiritual. Belonging to Jesus does not save us from physical death, but it does indeed save us from spiritual death, which is by far the most important. The Sovereign Creator took on human form in this world and paid, on the cross, the 'wages' for our sin, thereby satisfying God's justice. It took an infinite Being to pay an 'infinite' penalty.

[5] See Habakkuk 2:4. To 'live by faith' you must move from one exercise of faith to another. I have lived by faith for over 60 years, and I maintain that it is better than the life of an unbeliever. Although I am not always filled with the Spirit, it is also true that I am never empty; He is always with me.

[6] To 'suppress the truth' is a deliberate act, an evil choice that invites God's wrath. Consider 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12: "That one's coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception among those who are wasting themselves, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved. 11 Yes, because of this God will send them an active

evident among them, because God has shown it to them. **20**Because His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood from what has been made, so that they are inexcusable;[1] **21**precisely because, knowing God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks;[2] so their reasonings became worthless and their senseless hearts were

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delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all may be condemned who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in wickedness."

Did you get that? To reject the love of the truth brings God's judgment. To hear a sermon about 'the love of God' is easy enough, but how many have you heard (or preached) about 'the wrath of God'? "God hates sin but loves the sinner" is standard fare, but consider Psalm 5:4-6—"For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in your sight; You **hate** all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man." This is not an isolated text; there are a fair number of others in the same vein. Someone who deliberately chooses to be and promote evil thereby makes God his enemy. In John 6:44 Sovereign Jesus said: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Do you suppose that the Father will 'draw' someone He hates? Perhaps we should do more preaching on the wrath of God (although that will probably send people scurrying to other churches).

[1] All scientific experiment and true human knowledge is based on the principle of cause and effect—we observe an effect and try to isolate its cause. As a logical corollary, the cause must be as great or greater than the effect, otherwise it could not produce it. Any human being who is both honest and intelligent, confronted with the observable universe, with its incredible order and complexity, must conclude that there has to be a CAUSE who is both incredibly intelligent and powerful—to refuse to do so is perverse. Since we have personality, He must as well. So Paul's argument is precisely correct. To deny the existence of the Creator is to be without excuse.

The science of physics tells us that the entire known universe, taking only what is inorganic (not part of any living system), can be described using up to 350 bits of information. To describe the smallest protein molecule (unable to live alone, but part of a living system) requires some 1,500 bits of information (the e-coli bacterium some 7 million; one human cell some 20 billion). Now just where could chance plus nothing find 1,150 bits of **new** information (to produce the simplest protein), if in the whole universe there was only 350? The evolutionary hypothesis as an explanation for the origin of life is ridiculously, stupidly impossible!

The science of genetics, with its genome projects, has discovered that a change of just 3 nucleotides is usually fatal to the organism. The genetic difference between a human being and a chimpanzee (closest relative) is at least 1.6%—this represents a gap of some 48 million nucleotide differences. Since a random change of only 3 nucleotides is fatal to an animal, and a dead animal cannot reproduce, there is no possible way that a chimp could evolve into a human. Each individual species had to be assembled separately, just like Genesis says. The 'geologic column' is a fiction, since there are multistrate tree fossils. Symbiotic plants and insects could not possibly evolve. And so on. Please see "The theory of evolution is scientifically impossible" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[2] To turn against the Creator, to deny His existence, is a deliberate, culpable choice, since it goes against the observable scientific evidence. Consider Galatians 6:7-8: "Do not be deceived, God does not allow Himself to be treated with contempt; because whatever a man sows, that he will also reap—he who sows to his own flesh will reap deterioration from that flesh; he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from that Spirit."

darkened.[1] **22**Claiming to be wise, they became fools,[2] **23**and exchanged for themselves[3] the glory of the incorruptible God for an image resembling a perishable man[4]—even birds and quadrupeds and reptiles!

24Therefore God also gave them up, through the cravings of their hearts for vileness,[5] to the degrading of their bodies among themselves —**25**those who had exchanged the truth of God for the lie,[6] and

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[1] When you deliberately turn out the light, you condemn yourself to grope about in darkness, and you cannot see what is attacking you. 'Were darkened' is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, by what or by whom? Ephesians 2:2 refers to Satan as "the spirit who now works in the sons of the disobedience". When someone rejects the Creator he also rejects His protection; by choosing to become a 'son of the disobedience', a person invites Satan into his mind, and Satan brings darkness.

I am reminded of our Lord's words in Matthew 6:22-23. "The lamp of the body is the eye. So if your eye is sound your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has "eye" in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real 'eye')—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it. "Evil" here has the idea of malignant—aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to <u>everything</u> he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. As Titus 1:15 says: "To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; in fact, both their minds and their consciences are defiled".

[2] 'Modern man' struts about, thinking that he is smarter than former generations. Anyone who embraces materialistic, relativistic humanism is a true fool.

[3] I here follow the best line of transmission, that has the verb in the reflexive voice; they did it on purpose.

[4] Any god you create will be smaller than you are—totally worthless!

[5] Help! How can a human heart get to the point that it 'craves vileness' or depravity? What a terrible picture! Such people will keep on doing vile and depraved things, on and on, as long as they can. They are locked in to depravity, with no hope of escape. Vileness is like a drug; it obeys the law of diminishing returns. The first time you try a drug, it gives you a pleasant sensation, but from then on, to produce the same effect, you have to increase the dose, a type a slavery. Vileness takes a person ever lower, always dirtier, more perverse, more malignant. On the highway to Hell, they have passed the point of no return. The next note explains how they got that way.

[6] Note that they turned their backs on God first; His giving them up was a consequence of their choice. All the evil in the world is a consequence of men's evil choices—God should not be blamed. That said, however, any time a person chooses evil he invites Satan into his mind, and Satan will push the person toward ever lower levels of depravity. I believe that Hebrews 2:7 is relevant here: "You made him [man, verse 6] lower than the angels, for a little while" (quoting Psalm 8:5). The human being is superior to the angelic being in essence; we bear the Creator's image and they do not, and once glorified that superiority will be obvious, but only for the redeemed. Those who serve Satan subordinate themselves to him, and thus can never rise above him. If Lucifer's rebellion was provoked, as I suppose, by the creation of a being superior to himself, he is doing very well at getting his 'revenge', by depriving the vast majority of humanity of that superiority [and so Hebrews 2:8 would not apply to them].

Remember that in the beginning the Creator gave Adam the office of administering the earth, which he gave to Satan (whether or not he understood this consequence when he sinned). In Luke 4:5-7 Satan offers Jesus dominion over the earth saying, "It has been handed over to <u>me</u>, and I give it to whomever I want to". Note that Jesus did

worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Depravity

26For this reason God gave them up[1] to degrading passions; in fact, even their females exchanged the natural sexual function for that against nature; **27**likewise also the males, abandoning the natural use of the female, were inflamed[2] in their lust toward one another, males committing the disgraceful act[3] with males, and receiving in themselves the due penalty[4] for their error.

28So precisely because they determined not to retain God in their knowledge,[5] God gave them up to a debased mind, to do wrong things: **29**having been filled[6] with all unrighteousness, fornication,[7] wickedness, greed, depravity; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; gossips, **30**slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, braggarts, contrivers of evil things, disobedient to parents, **31**senseless, faithless, hard-hearted,

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not deny this statement. That said, however, it does seem that it is through the sins of men that Satan and demons do most of their work in this world.

Satan is now controlled by spite; he was demoted. Since he is unable to create, he gets his satisfaction by degrading and destroying. His greatest 'pleasure' must be to drag the image of the Creator through the mire, and for that purpose anal sex is just the ticket. Since it is a man's seed that transmits the 'image' (see Hebrews 7:10 and Romans 5:12), anal sex mixes the image of God with feces—a monstrous insult! The practice of anal sex is the equivalent of spitting in the face of the Creator; it is an extremely serious offense (worse than a buck private spitting in the face of a four-star general). So then, as soon as God removes His hand, Satan pushes men toward anal sex, thereby making it increasingly difficult for them to ever be saved (as verses 26-32 below make clear).

In Hebrews 7:9-10 the inspired author states that Levi was in Abraham and also paid tithes to Melchizedek, but when Abraham met Melchizedek, Isaac had not been born yet, and much less Jacob and Levi. So the human spirit, the 'image' of the Creator, is transmitted by a man's sperm. This agrees with Romans 5:12-21, where it is stated that Adam's sin contaminated all of his descendants. When Eve sinned, she sinned alone. When Adam sinned, we sinned as well. Due to Adam's rebellious choice, sin entered the gene pool that defines what a human being is. What a calamity!

1 If God gives you up, you are in a bad way! Most people today live in cultures controlled by Satan; if they do not resist their culture, they have very little chance of salvation.

2 The verb is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, by whom? The answer has already been given in the note above. I doubt that anyone performs anal sex without a demon present.

3 The noun here is singular and with the definite article, 'the act'. The seriousness of this has been explained above. Neither a catamite nor a sodomite enters the Kingdom—1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

4 Whatever this 'penalty' is (the Text does not identify it), why would any sane person want it?

5 It needs to be emphasized that this is a deliberate choice.

6 The passive voice again; God gives them up and Satan takes over.

7 Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "fornication", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.—an inferior proceeding, being a simple case of 'like ending'.

intransigent,[1] unmerciful; **32**who, knowing full well God's just sentence, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do them but also approve of other practitioners.[2]

Judgment

2 **1**Now then, you there, whoever you are who judges someone else for things you practice yourself[3]—you condemn yourself and are inexcusable. **2**Further, we know that God's judgment against those who practice such things[4] is according to truth. **3**So then, you there, you who judge those who practice such things while doing the same, do you really imagine that you will escape God's judgment?[5] **4**Or do you scorn the riches of His kindness, tolerance and longsuffering, not recognizing that the goodness of God is leading you toward repentance?[6] **5**Rather, due to your hardness and unrepentant heart, you are treasuring up wrath for yourself in the day of God's wrath and revelation and righteous judgment,[7] **6**who will repay each one according to his works:[8] **7**to those who seek for glory, honor and incorruption, by persevering in doing good—eternal life;[9] **8**but to those who, due to self-seeking,[10] are actually disobeying the truth (while obeying the unrighteousness)—fury and wrath:[11] **9**tribulation and anguish, upon every human soul who works at the evil,[12] whether Jew (first) or Greek; **10**but glory, honor and peace to

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[1] Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "intransigent", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.—an inferior proceeding, being another simple case of 'like ending'.

[2] Is this not a perfect picture of 'modern man'? (Of course things were at least that bad before the Flood.) Note "<u>are</u> deserving of death"; the verb is in the present tense, and Paul wrote this years after Pentecost, and consequently within the age of Grace. Through Moses the Creator articulated the death penalty for certain practices. Paul's use of '**are**' indicates that the penalty has not been revoked or annulled.

[3] Lamentably, we all know of religious leaders who have been caught doing things that they condemn from the pulpit.

[4] The 'such things' refers back to the content of 1:29-31.

[5] What sort of blindness could this be, for such a person to imagine that he will escape judgment?

[6] Just because God is good, kind, tolerant and longsuffering, people imagine that He is weak, or even non-existent [!]—how wrong they are!

[7] The full revelation of God's wrath and righteous judgment is going to take a lot of people by surprise. To 'treasure up' such wrath is incredibly stupid, if not insane.

[8] See Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12. Each one of us must give an accounting, based on what we <u>did</u> (not on what we said we believed). It is also true that we will be judged for sins of omission: James 4:7. No one is an island. We are surrounded by others. But what about those who never heard?

[9] One is reminded of Cornelius as a case in point (Acts 10). See 2 Chronicles 16:9 and John 4:23-24.

[10] The essence of sin is self. It is our egocentricity that destroys us spiritually. All babies are self-centered, as they must be in order to survive physically in this world. But as they grow, they need to be taught a better way.

[11] Here we have a chiastic structure, ab:ba—verse 7 = a; verse 8 = b; verse 9 = b; verse 10 = a.

[12] I suppose that God is wrathful because of the damage that such people inflict upon others, at least in part. See Psalm 5:4-6. Evil is aggressive, malignant, and the good

everyone who works the good, whether Jew (first) or Greek.[1]

[11]Now there is no favoritism with God. [12]For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law; while as many as have sinned with law will be judged by law.[2] [13]For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified[3] [14](indeed, whenever the ethnic nations that do not have law do by nature the things of the law, these, although not having law, are a law to themselves; [15]who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness,[4] and their reasonings among themselves accusing or even excusing) [16]in the day when God will judge people's secrets by Jesus Christ; all of which is part of my Gospel.[5]

To Jews

Law

[17]Look, you declare yourself a Jew, and rest on the Law, and boast in God, [18]and know the Will, and approve the superior things, being instructed out of the Law. [19]Further, you are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, [20]an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth.[6] [21]You then, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach not to steal, do you steal? [22]You who say not to commit adultery, do you adulterate? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? [23]You who boast in the Law, do you dishonor God through the transgression of the Law? [24]For, just as it is written: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."[7]

Circumcision

[25]Now circumcision does have value if you keep the Law, but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. [26]So if the uncircumcised keeps the righteous requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? [27]Yes, the

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should also be aggressive. Salt and light are aggressive. Our omission allows Satan to take over the culture where we live.

1 Working good looks to be a better deal than working evil!

2 God is just, and His judgment takes into account the amount of light that a person had, but all will be judged. Our Lord's words in Luke 12:47-48 spell this out.

3 Over and over the Text makes clear that we have to do.

4 Everyone is born with a conscience, and with intelligence to see that some things produce a good result while others produce a bad result.

5 In John 5:22 the Lord Jesus stated plainly that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, developing the theme in verses 23-29; see also Acts 17:31 and Revelation 19:15. That there are no 'secrets' unknown to God is made clear in passages like Psalm 139:1-16 and Hebrews 4:12-13. That the Day of God involves judging is clear in the O.T., but it is only from the N.T. that we learn of the role that Jesus will play in that judging.

6 "The embodiment of knowledge and truth" is an excellent description of the Scriptures. It follows that we should not be ashamed of God's Word.

7 See Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22. The problem of not practicing what one preaches has been around for quite a while.

physically uncircumcised who fulfills the law will judge you, complete with written code and circumcision, who are a transgressor of the Law. **28**Because a person is not a [true] Jew who is *only* one outwardly, nor is [true] circumcision something outward in the flesh; **29**but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—in spirit, not letter—whose praise is not from men but from God.[1]

Advantage

3 **1**So what advantage does the Jew have, or what is the profit of circumcision? **2**Much in every way![2] First of all, because they were entrusted with the oracles of God.[3] **3**So, what if some were not faithful? Their unfaithfulness will not nullify God's faithfulness, will it? **4**Of course not! Rather, let God be found true, but every man a liar; just as it is written: "That you may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged."[4]

False arguments

5Now if our unrighteousness highlights God's righteousness, what shall we say? God is not unrighteous for inflicting His wrath, is He (as someone might argue)? **6**Of course not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world? **7**Or: if the truth of God abounded to His glory by my falsehood, just why am I still judged as a sinner?[5] **8**Or (as some people slanderously claim that we are saying): "Let us do evil so that good may come".[6] Their condemnation is well deserved!

All are under sin

9What then? Are we any better? Not at all! For we have already charged both Jews and Greeks[7] that they are all under sin. **10**Just as it is written:

> "No one is righteous, not even one; **11**there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. **12**All have turned aside, together they have been made useless; there is no one who shows kindness,

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1 God looks on the heart. Those who worship Him must do so 'in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23-24). We do not choose who will procreate us, nor does a baby boy choose to be circumcised, so such factors cannot guarantee God's acceptance. Advantages are advantages, but they do not guarantee salvation.

2 For a fuller list of the advantages, see Romans 9:4-5. To be born into a culture that has been blessed with God's Light is certainly an advantage.

3 Job was written by a pre-Jew, but all the rest of the Old Testament, which is what Paul is referring to, was written by Jews. For that matter, all the books of the New Testament were also written by Jews (with the exception of Luke; see Colossians 4:11 and 14). "The oracles of God" are God's written Revelation to the human race.

4 See Psalm 51:4. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful—He is incapable of denying Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

5 If I choose falsehood, it is an evil choice, and I deserve to be punished, quite apart from any highlighting of God's righteousness. Any 'highlighting' does not alter the nature of my choice.

6 Such an argument does not follow, because all evil has consequences in this life and in this world, and any eventual 'good' does not undo those consequences, and neither does it compensate for them.

7 Paul uses 'Greeks' as a cover term for all non-Jews.

no, not so much as one."[1] 13"Their throat is an opened grave; they habitually deceive with their tongues."[2] "Viper's venom is under their lips";[3] 14"whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."[4] 15"Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, 17and the way of peace they have not known."[5] 18"There is no fear of God before their eyes."[6]

19Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world become accountable to God. 20It follows that no flesh will be justified in His sight by the works of the law,[7] because through the law comes the real knowledge of sin.[8]

Righteousness by faith

21But now,[9] apart from law, a righteousness from God has been revealed, being attested by the Law and the Prophets,[10] 22namely, a righteousness from God based on Jesus Christ's faithfulness,[11] into all and upon all[12] those who believe. There is no difference: 23all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,[13] 24being justified freely by His grace

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1 See Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20.

2 See Psalm 5:9.

3 See Psalm 140:3.

4 See Psalm 10:7.

5 See Isaiah 59:7-8.

6 See Psalm 36:1. The picture painted in verses 10-18 is not pretty! The description includes both Jews and Gentiles. Since the Creator is the only one who is competent to dictate moral values, someone who denies His authority (or worse, His existence) will not be bound by such values. We have already commented on what Satan does with a 'son of the disobedience'; the result is 'ruin and wretchedness'. Why would any sane person want that?

7 The final accounting is based on our works, what we did—but no one will be justified on that basis. Our justification comes through the shed blood of God's Lamb.

8 In chapter 7:7-12 Paul talks more about the effect of the Law.

9 Even before, it was by faith that someone would resolve to obey the Law.

10 But it was not very clear in the OT.

11 I have changed my former rendering. There is no article with `faith` (in the Greek Text) and no preposition or article with `Jesus Christ`, that is in the genitive case. An interlinear translation would be `a faith of Jesus Christ`, or `Jesus Christ`s faith`. But the word `faith` also means `faithfulness`. If the Lord Jesus had not been faithful to the Father`s will, there would be no righteousness to pass around.

12 That righteousness is available to all, but is only applied to those who believe. Perhaps 7% of the Greek MSS omit "and upon all", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc. —an inferior proceeding (it is an easy case of 'similar ending'—the eye of the copyist skipped from one 'all' to the next). On the other hand, perhaps an officious copyist couldn`t see the reason for `upon all` and simply removed it. With the Holy Spirit we have Christ`s righteousness within us, but in what sense is it also `upon` us? Perhaps it means that when the Father looks at us He sees that righteousness, not our sin.

13 What do you think 'the glory of God' refers to? In this context it can scarcely be brilliance or effulgence. I suggest that God's true glory is what He Himself **is**, His essence—truth, holiness, justice, love, among others. Although pristine Adam presumably reflected that essence quite well, the Fall resulted in a barrier that man cannot cross, apart from divine assistance. I suspect that modern man is but a poor reflection

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; 25whom God has openly made available as a propitiation through the faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness because of the passing over, in God's forbearance, of the previously committed sins;[1] 26to demonstrate His righteousness at this present time, so as to be just, Himself, and the justifier of him who is of the Faith of Jesus.[2]

27Where then is the boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law, that of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28Therefore we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from works of law. 29Or is God for Jews only? Is He not also for Gentiles? Yes, also for Gentiles, 30since indeed there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through the Faith.[3] 31Do we then nullify law through the Faith? Of course not! Rather, we uphold law.[4]

Abraham

4 1What then shall we say that our father Abraham discovered, as a man? 2If Abraham was really justified by works, he has a boast—but not before God. 3So what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."[5] 4Now to him who works, the pay is not counted as a gift but as an obligation. 5But to him who does not work[6] but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

6Just as David speaks of the blessing of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7"Blessed are they whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered up. 8Blessed is the man to whom the LORD will not impute sin!"[7]

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of what pristine Adam once was (due to accumulated congenital weaknesses). Alas, we fall far short!

1 "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13, 22-23). "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). 1 Peter 1:18-20 states that the Lamb, with His blood shed, was so foreknown before the foundation of the world. All the animal blood shed in the Old Testament only covered sin; it did not pay for it. All those sacrifices looked forward to Christ's perfect sacrifice. But all of that was only validated by the death of God's Lamb. So as verse 25 here states, the true propitiation is now available "through the faith in His blood". This propitiation also benefits the Old Testament saints. Christ's righteousness is imputed to them; that justifies His having 'passed over' their sins at the time. Salvation for any and all, including Adam, depends on Christ's sacrifice.

2 I take the reference to be to the Faith that revolves around the person and work of Jesus.

3 How could a ritual performed on a baby justify that baby? A circumcised person had to demonstrate faith in God by shedding animal blood to cover his sin; this before the perfect Sacrifice. Now justification comes through the Faith.

4 The proper function of the law is recognized within the Faith.

5 See Genesis 15:6.

6 We work because we have been justified, not in order to be justified (Ephesians 2:10). See further James 2:21-23—a living faith does things.

7 See Psalm 32:1-2. The negative is emphasized.

Before circumcision

9Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? Since we say that faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness, 10how then was it credited? After he was circumcised or while still uncircumcised? Not circumcised, but uncircumcised! 11And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness from his faith while still uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all those who believe while uncircumcised, in order that this righteousness may be credited to them also,[1] 12and the father of the circumcised—not only those who are circumcised, but especially those who follow in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham while still uncircumcised.[2]

The promise

13Now the promise that he would be the heir of the world[3] was not to Abraham, or his seed, through law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14For if those who are of law are heirs, the faith is made empty and the promise has been invalidated; 15because the law produces wrath, since where there is no law neither is there transgression.[4] 16For this reason it is of faith so that it may be according to grace, in order that the promise be guaranteed to all the seed—not only to those of the law, but also to those of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all; 17just as it is written: "I have made you a father of many ethnic nations"[5]—in the presence of Him whom he believed: God, who gives life to the dead and calls the non-existent things as though they did exist.[6]

18Contrary to hope, Abraham in hope believed, so as to become a father of many ethnic nations, according to what had been spoken: "So shall your seed be."[7] 19And not being weak in faith, he did not[8] consider

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[1] We non-Jews may wonder why Paul is spending so much time on the subject of circumcision, but to the Jews of that day it was BIG.

[2] The point is that physical circumcision is not enough; one must believe.

[3] Now what might 'heir of the world' mean? "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Galatians 3:16 makes clear that the Seed, singular, refers to the Christ (Genesis 12:7 and 24:7). Psalm 2:7-8 also clearly refers to the Christ: "I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.'" It might be argued that in some sense this is happening through the Church, Christ's body—in Matthew 5:13-14 the Christ called His disciples "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world". Paul states, "all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:22-23). But during the millennial Messianic Kingdom the whole world will obey the Christ, who will rule the nations with 'a rod of iron' (Revelation 19:15).

[4] How can you cross a line that is not there? So until someone draws a line (law) there is no transgression.

[5] See Genesis 17:5.

[6] God can create just by speaking: if He says, "Let there be…", there is.

[7] See Genesis 15:5.

[8] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality) omit "not", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

his own body, already dead[1] (being about a hundred years old), or the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20He did not waver at God's promise in unbelief; rather, he was strengthened by the faith, giving glory to God, 21being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform[2]—22that is why it was credited to him as righteousness.

23Now it was not only for his sake that it was written that it was credited to him, 24but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, we who believe on Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.[3]

To believers

Peace with God

5 1Therefore, having been justified by faith, let us be at[4] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom also we have had the access, by the Faith, into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3Not only so, but we should also rejoice[5] in the sufferings, knowing that the suffering produces perseverance; 4and the perseverance, proven character; and the proven character, hope; 5and the hope does not humiliate, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.[6]

Reconciliation

6Now then, when we were incapacitated, even so Christ died for the ungodly, at the right moment. 7Now scarcely even for a righteous person will someone *offer to* die (although on behalf of a good man someone might dare even to die), 8but God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us! 9So now that we have been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from the wrath through Him! 10Because since we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, while we were enemies, how much more,

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1 Paul declares that Abraham had become impotent before begetting Isaac. That means that he had started slowing down long before, and no one would be more aware of that than Sarah. That may explain why she offered Hagar—she was aware of the Promise and Abraham needed a descendent.

2 "Being fully convinced" is a basic ingredient in true faith.

3 The grammatical construction is the same in both clauses: 'because', 'because'. The resurrection was the proof that the Father had accepted the price paid for our justification. Thank you, Jesus!

4 The Greek manuscripts are about evenly divided between the Indicative and the Subjunctive form of the verb (the difference is between two similar sounding vowels). Most versions follow the Indicative, but the best line of transmission has the Subjunctive, and I follow it. Remember the 'from faith to faith' in Romans 1:17.

5 The form of the verb is ambiguous between Indicative and Subjunctive; I take it that the Subjunctive is intended. The same ambiguity attaches to the same verb in verse two, where I chose the Indicative, since the thought is reinforced in verse 11 below.

6 A hope based on the person and work of the Holy Spirit within us in not a false hope.

having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life![1] 11No wonder we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation![2]

Death X Life

12Now then, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, just so death spread to all men, because all sinned[3] 13—sin was in the world before the law, to be sure, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression[4] (he is a type of the coming one).[5]

15Now the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one, how much more did God's grace and the bounty by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many! 16Again, the gift is not like what came from one man's having sinned: because the judgment into condemnation followed one offense, while the gracious gift into justification followed many offenses.[6] 17Further, if by the offense of the one man death reigned through that man, much more will those who receive the abundance of the grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.[7]

18So then, as through one offense there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is life-giving justification for

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[1] As it says in 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness", so once we are reconciled, we have every reason to succeed! But it is a process, and the result is not automatic.

[2] Yes! Amen! Praise God!

[3] The structure here is a 'chiasmus': AB,BA.

[4] Well dear me, how does that work? If sin is not 'imputed', why is there death? The verb 'imputed' refers to an account made up of a list of specific items. If I run up a bill at a local store, when I meet the owner on the street we both know I'm in debt, even without an itemized bill in hand. The debt affects our relationship, and may affect my standing in the community, and that of my family, etc.—the consequences derive from the fact, not the itemized list. So "death reigned from Adam to Moses" based on the fact of sin, not on an itemized list.

"The wages of sin is death", so since we are sinners by inclination (birth) and choice, death reigns. Although there is no explicit instruction about animal sacrifice in the first chapters of Genesis, it is implied. For God to accept Abel's sacrifice and reject Cain's, there must have been instruction about such things (Genesis 4:3-5). Indeed, God had given the example by killing an animal to cover the nakedness of the fallen pair (Genesis 3:21). In Genesis 8:20-21 the implication is clear that Noah knew what he was supposed to do. And Job, who lived before Abraham (presumably), knew about sacrifice for sin (Job 1:5).

[5] As a transgressor, Adam is not a type of Christ, so I take the reference to be to 'the man of sin'. Just as Adam's sin affected the whole world, so the Antichrist's 'abomination' will affect the whole world, both in a bad way.

[6] I do not find Paul's reasoning here to be transparent. Perhaps the contrast is heightened in that the gift overcame <u>many</u> offenses.

[7] The first Adam lost the Life; the second/last Adam gives it back.

everyone.[1] 19For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners,[2] so also through the obedience of the One the many[3] will be constituted righteous. 20However, law came on the scene so that the offense might abound; but where the sin abounded, the grace superabounded, 21so that just as sin reigned in the death,[4] so also the grace might reign through righteousness into eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Newness of life

6 1So what shall we say? Shall we continue in the sin so that the grace may abound? 2Of course not! How can we who died to sin keep on living in it? 3Or are you unaware that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?[5] 4Therefore, we were buried with Him by means of that baptism into that death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by means of the Father's glory, we also should walk in newness of life.

5Now since we have become united with Him through the projection of His death,[6] we will certainly be so through that of His resurrection as well; 6knowing this, that our old self[7] was crucified with Him in order that the body of the sin[8] might be set aside, so that we no longer be enslaved to that sin—7because he who has died has been released from that sin.[9]

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1 The comparison is interesting, but there is a fundamental difference—we are born condemned, but not justified! There is a way to escape the condemnation, but you have to take it, or remain condemned. The life-giving justification is available, but you have to believe into Jesus to get it.

2 Because of Adam's rebellious choice, sin became part of the genetic pool that defines a human being. Alas!

3 The phrase 'the many' occurs twice in this verse, but the roster of included people is presumably not the same—the second roster is smaller.

4 'The death' refers to the world controlled by Satan, where sin reigns; to be separated from God is spiritual death.

5 In Paul's day (at least) there were those who thought that the physical rite of circumcision was a passport to heaven. We have already seen in Romans 2:25-29 that Paul rejects that notion—God looks on the heart. In our day there are those who think that the physical rite of water baptism is a similar passport, but we probably all know individuals who had their 'bath' and are now living for Satan—God looks on the heart. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 explains that it is the Holy Spirit who baptizes us into Christ: "…so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." If we become part of Christ's body, then whatever happens to that body happens to us. If that body died, we did. If it was buried, so were we. If it was raised from the dead, we will be too. Correction—we already have new life in Christ, and are to live on that basis.

6 For an explanation of this translation, please see 'Projection—Romans 6:5' on my website: www.prunch.org.

7 Literally 'man'. The reference is to the old, or fallen, nature, with which we are all born. Only those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit acquire a new one.

8 That is, the body that resulted from 'the sin' (Adam's); that is, a fallen body, whose natural inclination is not toward holiness.

9 Presumably a dead person does not do much sinning.

8 Now since we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live
with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead,
cannot die again;[1] death can no longer master Him—10 the death He died
He died to sin once for all, while the life He lives He lives to God. 11 Thus
you also, consider yourselves to be dead indeed to the sin, but alive to
God in Christ Jesus our Lord.[2]

Down with sin!

12 Therefore do not let the sin reign in your mortal body, so that you
obey it with the body's evil desires[3]—13 do not present any part[4] of your
body to sin as an implement for unrighteousness, but present yourselves
to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your body parts to God
as implements for righteousness. 14 Really, sin must not rule over you,
because you are not under law but under grace.

Grace, not license

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under
grace? Of course not! 16 Do you not know that when you offer yourselves
to someone to obey them as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you
obey—whether of sin into death, or of obedience into righteousness?
17 But thanks be to God that although you used to be the slaves of the sin
you wholeheartedly obeyed that pattern of doctrine into which you were
delivered. 18 So having been emancipated from the sin, you became
enslaved to the righteousness.[5]

19 I continue to speak on a human level because of the weakness of
your flesh. Now just as you used to present your body parts as slaves to
uncleanness, and to ever increasing lawlessness,[6] so now present your
body parts as slaves to righteousness with a view to sanctification. 20 For
when you were slaves to the sin, you were 'free' from the righteousness.

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[1] No one kills Jesus twice. Consider Hebrews 6:4-6: "Because, it is impossible to bring back into repentance those who were once for all enlightened, who have partaken of the heavenly gift and were made sharers in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have experienced God's good event and capabilities of the coming age, 6 and yet have fallen away—they would be crucifying the Son of God all over again, just for themselves, holding Him up to contempt." No amount of theological shifting and squirming can nullify the plain meaning of verse 6. The only way to crucify Jesus **again** is if you have already done so once before. No one is going to kill Jesus twice; if the first time was not good enough for you, you have had it! As He Himself said in John 10:17-18: "Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again." He laid it down once, freely, but that is all.

[2] Some 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "our Lord", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[3] We usually use our bodies to do the sinning, often because of a wrong or exaggerated expression of a normal physical function.

[4] Literally, 'the members'.

[5] Recall the note about slaves at Romans 1:1.

[6] Sin, and mere gratification of physical desire, obey the law of diminishing returns. To maintain the same 'kick' from any drug, you have to keep increasing the dose—this is a slavery that keeps on dragging you down to ever lower levels.

21So what 'fruit' did you have at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? The end of those things is death![1] 22But now, having been emancipated from the sin, and having become enslaved to God, you have your 'fruit' into sanctification—and the end is eternal life! 23Because the wages of sin is death,[2] but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

More about law

7 1Do you not know, brothers (for I am speaking to those who know law), that the law has authority over someone only as long as he lives? 2For example, a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if the man should die, she is released from the law about the husband. 3So then, if she should 'marry' another man while her husband is living, she will be labeled an adulteress; but if the husband should die, she is free from that law, not being an adulteress if she marries another man.

4Therefore, my brothers, you also were put to death to the law through the body[3] of the Christ so as to belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—so that we should produce fruit to God. 5Because when we were in the flesh,[4] the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our body parts to produce fruit to death. 6But now we have been released from the law, having died to what was gripping us, so as to slave in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.[5]

Law and sin

7So what shall we say then? Is the law sin? Of course not! Indeed, I would not have come to know the sin[6] except through the law: I would not have recognized covetousness if the law had not said, "You must not covet." 8But the sin, grasping an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of coveting.[7]

Now without the law sin is dead. 9Once upon a time, without law, I was actually 'alive'; but when the commandment came, the sin came to life and I died. 10Yes, the commandment that was to bring me life turned

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1 Yea, verily!

2 Sin results in two deaths, physical and spiritual. The spiritual one is by far the more important since it lasts for eternity. Belonging to Jesus does not exempt us from physical death, but it does from the spiritual one—He gives us eternal life instead of eternal death. Eternal death means eternal separation from the Creator, presumably a conscious state.

3 This refers to His physical body, and probably to the death of that body.

4 'In the flesh' contrasts with 'in Christ' and probably refers to the natural/old man.

5 We are slaves in any case. What is in view is a change of owner.

6 If not a synonym for the fallen nature, or 'the flesh', 'the sin' appears to be closely related to it. 'The flesh' is Satan's ally inside us while 'the world' is his ally outside us. So without the Holy Spirit a person is in a bad way.

7 Anyone who has children has seen this principle at work (also if he can still remember how it was when he was a child). Once upon a time there was a doctrine that said that the children of Christians are born without a sin nature—I have always thought that the only people who could believe that would be people with no children!

out to bring death. 11Because the sin, grasping an opportunity through the commandment, completely deceived me, and used it to 'kill' me. 12So then, the law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Indwelling sin

13So has what is good become death to me? Of course not! Rather the sin, that it might be exposed as sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment the sin might become extremely sinful.[1] 14We know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been 'sold' under sin[2]—15you see, I do not understand what I am doing: I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate![3] 16But if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17So now it is no longer I who am doing it, but the sin dwelling in me. 18Further, I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; because to will is present with me, but I do not find how to perform the good. 19Because I do not do the good that I want to do; rather I practice the evil that I do not want to do. 20Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin dwelling in me. 21So I find this 'law': when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22I joyfully agree with God's law according to the inner man, 23but I see a different 'law' in my body parts, warring against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of the sin that is in my body parts.

24What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?[4] 25I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with

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[1] Have you never noticed that the presence of what is good seems to provoke others to be even worse than they otherwise would be?

[2] A person who was sold became a slave 'under' a new owner, so I take Paul's point to be that sin is giving the orders.

[3] In this interesting passage Paul contrasts his two natures. As an aid to the reader, I will attempt to identify the two natures throughout the passage.
14We know that the law is spiritual, but I [old] am fleshly, having been 'sold' under sin 15—you see, I [new] do not understand what I am [old] doing: I [old] do not practice what I [new] want to do, but I [old] do what I [new] hate! 16But if I [old] do what I [new] do not want to do, I [new] agree with the law that it is good. 17So now it is no longer I [new] who am doing it, but the sin dwelling in me [both]. 18Further, I [new] know that nothing good dwells in me [old], that is, in my flesh; because to will is present with me [new], but I [old] do not find how to perform the good. 19Because I [old] do not do the good that I [new] want to do; rather I [old] practice the evil that I [new] do not want to do. 20Now if I [old] do what I [new] do not want to do, it is no longer I [new] who do it, but the sin dwelling in me [both]. 21So I [new] find this 'law', when I [new] want to do good, evil is right there with me [both]. 22I [new] joyfully agree with God's law according to the inner man [new], 23but I [new] see a different 'law' in my body parts [old], warring against the law of my mind [new] and taking me [both] captive to the law of the sin that is in my body parts [old]. 24What a wretched man I am [both]! Who will deliver me [new] from this body of death [old]? 25I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself [new] serve God's law, but with the flesh [old], sin's law.

[4] A body that insists on sinning is a body that is condemned to death.

the mind I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, sin's law.

Deliverance

8 [1]Now then, there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit,[1] [2]because the law of the spirit of the life in Christ Jesus has set me[2] free from the law of the sin and the death. [3]Further, what the law could not do, in that it was weak due to the flesh, God has done by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned the sin in the flesh,[3] [4]so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Spirit X flesh

[5]Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. [6]Further, the mind-set of the flesh yields death, but the mind-set of the Spirit yields life and peace; [7]because the mind-set of the flesh represents enmity against God, since it does not submit to God's law, nor indeed can it. [8]So, those who are 'in flesh' cannot please God.[4] [9]You, however, are not 'in flesh' but 'in Spirit', if indeed God's Spirit dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. [10]But if Christ is in you, the body is dead through sin, but the Spirit is life through righteousness. [11]And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised the Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies[5] because of His Spirit who dwells in

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[1] "Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" is omitted by 2.3% of the Greek manuscripts (of inferior quality, objectively so), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc. Those who follow the 2.3% like to claim that the clause was imported from verse four. But Paul is a Jew, and they like to repeat things. In Romans 7:14-23 Paul described the conflict of the two natures within himself—he was not 'home free'. That he is not through with the topic is clear from verses 5-17 below, where he describes in detail the conflict between flesh and Spirit. The reader may rest assured that the 97% are correct. Anyone who insists on walking according to the flesh will discover that there is indeed condemnation.

[2] Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts read 'you' singular, to be followed by NASB and LB. But 'you' in English is ambiguous as to number, and neither NASB nor LB tells the reader that 'you' is singular (because in the context it is obviously wrong). Both versions favor the reader with a footnote informing that "some" manuscripts read "me" [their way of referring to 700 against 4, which to my mind is a dishonest use of language].

[3] The sin in our flesh having been condemned, it is now possible to walk according to the Spirit.

[4] This is a 'genetic' incapability, so we need a new birth.

[5] Where, down here? If it is "because of His Spirit who dwells [present tense] in you", presumably so. Consider 1 Thessalonians 5:23—"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." I take it that the grammatical structure of this phrase, "the spirit and the soul and the body" (in Greek), demands a tripartite/trichotomous view of the human being. I confess that I have trouble imagining complete sanctification for the body, in this life, but there it is. Still, verse

you.[1]

Sonship

12So then, brothers, we have no obligation to the flesh, to live according to it; **13**because if you live according to the flesh, you are about to die; but if you put to death the practices of the body, by the Spirit, you will live. **14**Because as many as are led by God's Spirit, these are God's sons[2]—**15**you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fear all over again, but you did receive the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "*Abba*, Father!"[3] **16**That Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children—**17**if children, also heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ[4] (if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him).[5]

Redemption of the body

18I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is going to be revealed in us. **19**You see, the creation waits with eager anticipation for the revelation of God's sons; **20**because without choice the creation was subjected to futility, due to the One who did the subjecting, based on the hope **21**that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the freedom of the glory of God's children.[6] **22**Yes, we know that the whole creation has been groaning and in labor pains until now. **23**Not only that, we ourselves also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even <u>we</u> groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body. **24**Yes, we were saved in the hope,[7] but a hope that is seen is not hope—why would

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11 here does not demand 'complete' sanctification; obviously we use our mortal bodies as we serve God down here, and the more we use them to serve God, the more sanctified they will be.

1 In these verses we have 'Spirit of God', 'Spirit of Christ', 'Spirit' and 'Spirit of Him who raised Jesus'; so how many spirits or persons are there? I would say that Paul is just using different ways of referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Triune God. Comparing all the relevant passages, the Godhead is made up of just the three persons.

2 Hey, wait a minute; this is not what I was taught in Seminary! The Text says that in order to be God's son you must be led by God's Spirit! Verse 12 is addressed to 'brothers', and verse 13 says that to live according to the flesh results in death. But someone living according to the flesh is obviously <u>not</u> being led by the Spirit. You cannot die unless you are alive; notice also the "if indeed" in verse 17.

3 'Father' is a translation of the Aramaic '*Abba*'.

4 Wow! If we are co-heirs, then whatever the inheritance is belongs to us too. I leave it to the reader to research the contents of Christ's inheritance!

5 The clear implication is: no suffering, no glory. In the next verse the sufferings are treated as a fact.

6 In the beginning, when the Creator turned the administration of this planet over to Adam, everything was 'good'. But then came the Fall, and the administrator was no longer good. How could a fallen ruler administer a perfect creation? Since the creation was merely a setting for the man, the Creator reduced it to the same level, based on 'the hope' of a future restoration for both man and nature (see Romans 8:19-22).

7 Since the restoration of the planet depends on the restoration of Adam's descendants, at least some of them, and since this is a time-consuming process, we start out in 'the

anyone hope for what he sees? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await it with endurance.

26Likewise also the Spirit comes to the aid *of the hope* in our weaknesses, since we do not know what we need to pray for. Indeed the Spirit Himself intercedes on our behalf with inexpressible groanings, 27while He who searches the hearts knows what is on the Spirit's mind, since He prays for the saints in accordance with God.[1]

Glory

28Further, we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to purpose. 29Because whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,[2] so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. 30Further, whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.[3]

Summary to this point

31What then shall we say to these things? Since God is for us, who is against us? 32He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up on behalf of us all, how shall He not with Him also graciously give us all things?[4] 33Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? God is He who justifies. 34Who is he who condemns? Christ is He who died, but even more, was indeed raised, who indeed is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes on our behalf.[5]

35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? 36(As it is written: "For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are accounted as sheep for slaughter."[6]) 37No, in all these things we prevail completely through Him who loved us. 38Because I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, 39neither height nor depth nor any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.[7]

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hope'. However, the full restoration will only take place when Christ establishes His Messianic Kingdom.

1 The intercession of the Spirit represents two members of the Trinity! We do not know what we need to pray for (altogether too often), but the Spirit does, and for that He certainly deserves our thanks.

2 If you are not being conformed to the Son's image, there is something wrong, because this is probably the 'purpose'.

3 All the verbs in verse 30 are in the past tense, reflecting God's sovereignty. Note the sequence: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification.

4 2 Peter 1:3 again.

5 Comparing this with verse 27, all three members of the Trinity are cheering us on!

6 See Psalm 44:22. Our turn is coming; it is on the doorstep.

7 God's love is like a sphere, with us on the inside—nothing can reach us without first passing through the 'filter' of that love. (There are times when it is easier to say that than to believe it.)

Israel

9 [1]I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience is testifying with me in the Holy Spirit—[2]I have great sorrow and unceasing distress in my heart. [3]For I keep wishing that I myself could be accursed away from the Messiah in the place of my brothers, my physical relatives, [4]the Israelites.[1] To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. [5]The patriarchs are theirs, and from them came the Christ (the physical part),[2] who is over all, God forever blessed. Amen.

Children of the promise

[6]However, it is not as though the Word of God has failed![3] For not all who have descended from Israel are 'Israel'. [7]Neither are they all 'children' because they are Abraham's descendants; but, "in Isaac will your seed be called."[4] [8]That is, it is not the physical children who are God's 'children', but the children of the promise are regarded as 'seed'. [9]For this is the word of promise: "At this season I will come, and Sarah will have a son."[5]

[10]Not only that, but also when Rebecca had conceived twins by our forefather Isaac [11](though they had not yet been born, not having done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), [12]it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."[6] [13]As it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."[7]

It is pointless to fight God's Sovereignty!

[14]So what shall we say, there is no injustice with God, is there? Of course not! [15]For He says to Moses: "I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion."[8] [16]So then, it is not of him who wills nor of him who strives, but of God who shows mercy. [17]For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you, and that

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[1] Wow, Paul, do you really mean it? Perhaps he is reflecting God's sorrow.

[2] Both "the Christ" and "who is over all" are in the masculine gender, separated by *to kata sarka*, often rendered as 'according to the flesh'. But the article, *to*, is in the neuter gender, and so must have a different referent. Paul is being precisely correct: it was only the physical part of the Messiah that came through Israel, the divine part did not.

[3] The covenants and the promises involve human participation, so they only come to fruition for those who obey God (almost always a minority of the population).

[4] See Genesis 21:12.

[5] See Genesis 18:10,14.

[6] See Genesis 25:23.

[7] See Malachi 1:2,3. Of course Malachi was written over 1,000 years after the two had demonstrated their characters by their lives. Further, the 'hated' is not an active hate, but a disregard.

[8] See Exodus 33:19.

my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."[1] 18So then, He has mercy on whom He wishes, and He hardens whom He wishes.

19You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has ever resisted His will?" 20Really now, just who are you, O man, to talk back to God? What is formed will not say to the one who formed it, "Why did you make me like this," will it? 21Or has the potter no right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?[2]

22What if God, wishing to display His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23just in order to make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy,[3] which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24even us whom He called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? 25As He also says in Hosea: "I will call the 'not my people', 'my people', and the 'not loved' (f), 'loved'."[4] 26"And it will be in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the living God."[5]

27And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only the remnant will be saved; 28because He is finishing and cutting short an accounting in righteousness; yes, the Lord will impose a condensed accounting[6] upon the earth."[7] 29And as Isaiah had said previously: "Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah."[8]

Their present condition

30So what shall we say? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained to righteousness, namely the righteousness that comes from faith; 31while Israel, pursuing a standard of righteousness, did not attain to that standard. 32Why not? Because it was not from faith, but as from works of the law. They stumbled over the 'stumbling stone'; 33as it is written: "Look! I am placing in Zion a stumbling stone

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[1] See Exodus 9:16. If you check the record, Pharaoh hardened his own heart the first five times; after that God did the hardening.

[2] We can argue, and complain, and squirm, but after everything is said and done, when faced with God's Sovereignty we have just two options: rebel or submit, giving due regard to the consequences. That said, however, this text is concentrating on God's Sovereignty. Due regard must also be given to all the texts that deal with human responsibility.

[3] Presumably by way of contrast.

[4] See Hosea 2:23.

[5] See Hosea 1:10.

[6] "In righteousness; yes, the Lord will impose a condensed accounting" is omitted by less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[7] See Isaiah 10:22-23. It has always been the case that those who really want to walk with God represent a small minority of the population sample.

[8] See Isaiah 1:9. To be like Sodom would be complete destruction.

and a rock of offense, and no one who believes on Him will be put to shame."[1]

Israel needs salvation

10 [1]Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation. [2]For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to real knowledge. [3]For they, failing to understand God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to God's righteousness.

How to be saved

[4]Now for everyone who believes into righteousness, Christ is the end of the law[2]—[5]Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law: "The person who does these things will live by them."[3] [6]But the righteousness that is from faith speaks like this: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'"[4] (that is, to bring Christ down) [7]"or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?'"[5] (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). [8]So what does it say? "The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"[6] (that is, the message of faith that we proclaim): [9]That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. [10]Because with the heart one believes into righteousness, and with the mouth one promises[7] into salvation. [11]Because the Scripture says: "Everyone who believes on Him will never be put to shame"[8]; [12]because there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him; [13]because: "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."[9]

The message is necessary

[14]How then will they call on Him into whom they have not believed? And how can they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without someone proclaiming it? [15]And how will they proclaim unless they are sent? As it is written: "How timely is the arrival[10] of those who bring good news of peace,[11] of those who announce

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[1] See Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16. They had to 'believe on' the 'stumbling block', the Christ, but He did not perform the way they expected that the Messiah would perform.
[2] That is, as a means of salvation.
[3] See Leviticus 18:5.
[4] See Deuteronomy 30:12.
[5] The 'abyss' here is presumably not the eschatological one.
[6] See Deuteronomy 30:14.
[7] This refers to a solemn commitment made publicly—even a demon can mouth the phrase, 'Jesus is Lord', as can any person, except that the demon knows it is really true.
[8] See Isaiah 28:16.
[9] See Joel 2:32. This has always been true, although the level of opportunity differs from time to time and people to people.
[10] Literally, 'beautiful the feet'.
[11] "Of those who bring good news of peace" is omitted by 10.5% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

the good things."[1] 16(However, they did not all obey the gospel; because Isaiah says: "LORD, who has believed our message?"[2]) 17So, the faith is from a message, and that message is by the Word of God.[3]

A rebellious people

18But I say, did they really not hear? Indeed yes: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their spoken words to the ends of the inhabited world."[4] 19Again I say, did Israel really not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by a non-nation, I will move you to anger by a senseless nation."[5] 20But Isaiah is so bold as to say: "I was found by those who were not seeking me; I was revealed to those who were not asking for me."[6] 21But concerning Israel he says: "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."[7]

The remnant

11 1So now I say, God did not reject His people, did He? Of course not! Why I myself am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin![8] 2God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says about Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel saying: 3"LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to take my life!"[9] 4But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand men[10] who have not bowed the knee to Baal."[11] 5Even so then at this present time, there is a remnant according to an election by grace. 6Now if by grace, it is no longer from works; otherwise the grace is no longer grace. But if from works, it is no longer grace; otherwise the work is no longer work.[12]

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[1] See Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15.

[2] See Isaiah 53:1.

[3] Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts read 'Christ' rather than "God", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding. It is the Word of God that gives authority to our message. Actually, 'word' here is a spoken word, precisely the messenger proclaiming his good news.

[4] See Psalm 19:4.

[5] See Deuteronomy 32:21.

[6] See Isaiah 65:1.

[7] See Isaiah 65:2. To be 'disobedient' and 'contrary', there must be a revealed will, one that they knew about.

[8] Observe that Paul knew what tribe he belonged to; this at the beginning of the Christian era. If God would save Paul, then He is still saving Jews (and God knows what tribe they are from, even if they no longer do).

[9] See 1 Kings 19:10,14.

[10] The term here refers specifically to males.

[11] See 1 Kings 19:18. Evidently Elijah knew nothing about them, and perhaps each of them also thought he was the only one. I see a practical application here: I must never assume that what God is doing to and through me is the whole show, or even a major part of it. Now, much more than in Elijah's day, God is doing all sorts of interesting things all over the world!

[12] "But if from works, it is no longer grace; otherwise the work is no longer work" is omitted by 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

7What then? What Israel is seeking, this it did not obtain; but the election[1] did obtain it, while the rest were dulled. 8Just as it is written:
"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that were not to see and ears that were not to hear, to this very day."[2] 9And David says: "Let their table be made into a snare and into a trap, into a stumbling block and into a retribution to them. 10Let their eyes be darkened so as not to see, and their back always be bowed down."[3]

The restoration

11So now I say, surely they have not stumbled so as to fall [and stay fallen]? Of course not! Rather, through their transgression the salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. 12Now if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss riches for the nations, how much more their fulfillment!

13So I am speaking to you Gentiles (inasmuch as I am 'apostle to the Gentiles', I magnify my ministry), 14if somehow I can provoke my own people[4] to jealousy and save some of them. 15For if their being rejected means reconciliation for the world, what will their restoration be but life from the dead? 16Now if the 'firstfruit' is holy, so is the whole batch; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Grafted olive branches

17Now if some of the branches were broken off, while you, being a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them, and with them have become a partaker of the root and the rich sap of the cultivated olive, 18do not boast against those branches (since if you do boast—it is not you who support the root but the root you). 19You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20Granted. Because of unbelief they were broken off, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but fear! 21Because if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps He will not spare you either! 22So consider the kindness and severity of God: upon those who fell, severity; but toward you, kindness, if you continue in that kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off.[5] 23And even they, if they do not persist in the unbelief, will be grafted back in, because God has the power to graft them in again. 24For if you were cut out of a wild by nature olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?[6]

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1 'Election' acts as a mass noun, including all the elected individuals.
2 See Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 with attention.
3 See Psalm 69:22-23.
4 Literally, 'flesh'.
5 Here is a plain statement. 'Continuing' wins, and it is something that is up to us.
6 One is reminded of Ezekiel 18, the whole chapter—if you have not read it for a while, I suggest you refresh your memory.

Hardening

25 Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant of this 'mystery'[1] (so
that you not be conceited): hardening has come upon Israel in part until
the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be
saved, just as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He
will turn ungodliness away from Jacob;[2] 27 this is my covenant with
them, when I take away their sins."[3]

28 On the one hand, regarding the Gospel, they are enemies because
of you; on the other, regarding the election, they are beloved on account
of the forefathers. 29 Because God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevo-
cable.[4] 30 For just as you also were once disobedient to God, but now have
been shown mercy through their disobedience, 31 so also these have now
been disobedient that through the mercy shown to you they also may be
shown mercy. 32 Yes, God has given everyone over to disobedience so that
He might show mercy to all.[5]

Doxology

33 Oh, the depth of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge! How
unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways![6]
34 Because "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been
His counselor?"[7] 35 Or "Who has ever given to Him and has to be
repaid?"[8] 36 Because from Him and through Him and to Him are all
things.[9] To Him be the glory forever! Amen.

The will of God

12 1 Now then, brothers, I exhort you, in view of God's compassions, to
present your bodies as a living sacrifice,[10] holy, satisfying to God—

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1 This term is used of information that God has not yet made generally available, not about something mysterious.

2 'Jacob' is Jacob, not the Church!

3 See Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9. When will this happen? Presumably at the beginning of the millennial Messianic Kingdom. The conversion of the last Gentile will be followed by the Rapture. All the Israelites that enter the Kingdom will be saved (all rebels will have been executed).

4 That is, God does not take them back; what we do with them is another story.

5 A bitter pill, but apart from God's mercy we do not obey Him.

6 This is the 'answer' for all of us who would like to understand just how election works, and so on. God is too big, and we are too small!

7 See Isaiah 40:13 and Jeremiah 23:18.

8 See Job 41:11.

9 Everything said and done, God is the Owner of the universe.

10 Any animal in the Old Testament had to die in order to become a sacrifice, so what does Paul mean by a 'living' one? In 1 Corinthians 15:31 he said that he died every day. Paul could not have been referring to actual physical death, obviously, since Hebrews 9:27 affirms that it is appointed to men to die only once (no re-incarnation). He may well have faced possible death often enough, but I suppose he is referring to dying to himself. I suppose this is also the meaning of our Lord's words in Luke 9:23-24—"If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." In that day a cross was an instrument of death. We must die to

your intelligent duty. 2Yes, stop conforming to the pattern of this world; rather, be transformed by the renewing of your mind so as to be able to experience the good and satisfying and perfect will of God.[1]

Be sensible

3Based on the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to set your sights higher than you should, but set them sensibly, as God has apportioned a measure of faith to each.[2] 4Because just as in one body we have many parts, but all the parts do not have the same function, 5so we, who are many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. 6Since we have different spiritual gifts according to the grace that was given us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, according to the analogy of the Faith;[3] 7if serving, in the serving; if teaching, in the teaching; 8if exhorting, in the exhortation;[4] the sharer, with integrity; the leader, with diligence; the mercy-shower, with cheerfulness.[5]

Behave!

9Love is to be genuine: abhorring the malignant; clinging to the good; 10showing family affection to one another in brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; 11not lagging in diligence; serving the Lord with an enthusiastic spirit; 12rejoicing in the hope; enduring the affliction; continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13distributing to the needs of the saints; practicing hospitality.[6]

14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.[7] 15Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. 16Regard each other as being on the same level—do not distinguish the upper classes, but associate with the lower classes; do not exalt yourself.[8] 17Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Have regard for things that everyone considers to be good. 18If possible, what depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

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our own will in order to embrace God's. To present the body is presumably a metonym for presenting one's whole self.

1 'The pattern of this world' belongs to Satan, so it must be rejected in order to do God's will. Many 'Christians' appear to be afraid of God's will, as well they might, unless they meet the conditions—only then is it 'good', 'satisfying' and 'perfect'.

2 We need to understand what God wants us to be and do, and set our sights on that. Any attitude of competition, wanting to be bigger and better than others, will produce bad results.

3 Any prophesying needs to be in accordance with Scripture.

4 One might feel that Paul is being repetitious, but we all know people who try to operate in someone else's area of gifting, and the results are not good. If an ear tries to be an eye, both hearing and sight suffer.

5 Nothing like cheerfulness when helping someone who is hurting.

6 I take it that the whole paragraph is explaining just how love is to be genuine—very practical!

7 If a boss is mistreating you and you curse him, will he get better or worse? That said, however, I believe we must distinguish between things done against us personally and things done against the Kingdom. Something done against the Kingdom is an act of war, and needs to be repelled.

8 I take it that this text is dealing with social position, not personal abilities.

19 Dear ones, do not avenge yourselves; rather give place to the wrath;[1] for it is written: "Vengeance is up to me; I will repay,"[2] says the Lord. 20 Therefore, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will heap coals of fire on his head."[3] 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome the evil with the good.[4]

Submit

13 1 Let every soul submit to the governing authorities, because there is no authority except under God, and the existing authorities have been placed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority is opposed to God's ordinance, and those who oppose will bring judgment on themselves.[5] 3 Now rulers are not a terror to good deeds but to bad ones. So if you wish not to fear the authority, do the good and you will have praise from the same; 4 because it is God's minister to you with a view to the good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not bear the sword for nothing; because it is God's minister, an avenger with a view to wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore it is necessary to submit, not only because of the wrath, but also because of the conscience.[6] 6 This is precisely why you pay taxes, for they are God's servants, continually attending on this very thing.[7] 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes, customs to whom customs, respect to whom respect, honor to whom honor.

Love

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, since he who loves the other has fulfilled the law.[8] 9 Because—"You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear

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1 Wrath is normally expressed through physical violence, and perhaps in our day through legal action. These are the sort of reaction that an 'enemy' will expect, not acts of kindness, which may even make him feel ashamed of himself. In any case, we are not to descend to his level, but let God do any avenging.

2 See Deuteronomy 32:35.

3 See Proverbs 25:21-22. Presumably the 'coals of fire' are not literal.

4 Sounds great, but how does it work? Well, in Luke 10:19 Sovereign Jesus said: "Take note, I am giving you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing at all may harm you." And in Ephesians 3:20 we read: "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is working is us…" Please see my footnotes at those passages for an extended discussion.

5 God does not like anarchy.

6 Presumably regimes that are overtly evil are not in view. Where a regime overtly combats the good, while promoting the evil, divine guidance is especially necessary for representatives of the good, because even an evil regime exists by God's permission. That said, however, in Luke 10:19 Sovereign Jesus gives us "the authority over all the power of the enemy". It is therefore within the sphere of our competence to forbid any use of Satan's power in the administration of the country, in the surrounding culture, in the entertainment industry, and so on. The sky is the limit.

7 Have you ever seen a government that didn't want more money?

8 Of course this is *agape* love.

false witness,"[1] "You shall not covet,"[2] and whatever further commandment—everything is summed up in this word, namely: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[3] **10**Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment[4] of the law.

Put on Christ

11Besides this, knowing the time, it is high time for us to be awakened from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. **12**The night is nearly over, and the day is near;[5] so let us get rid of the works of the darkness, and let us put on the weapons of the light.[6] **13**Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual orgies and licentiousness, not in strife and jealousy. **14**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, with a view to lusts.[7]

The law of liberty

14 **1**Receive someone who is weak in the faith, but not for disputes over arguables. **2**One man has faith to eat everything, while the weak one eats only vegetables. **3**One who eats must not look down on one who does not, and one who does not eat must not judge one who does,[8] because God has accepted him. **4**Who are you to judge someone else's household servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And stand he will, for God has the power to make him stand.[9]

5One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind.[10] **6**He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.[11] And he who eats, eats to the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, also giving thanks to God. **7**You see, none of us lives

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[1] About a third of the Greek manuscripts omit "You shall not bear false witness", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[2] See Exodus 20:13-17 and Deuteronomy 5:17-21.

[3] See Leviticus 19:18.

[4] The Greek word here could also be rendered 'complement'.

[5] When a servant of Christ dies physically, he leaves the 'night' of this world behind and his 'day' of glory begins. Each day we live brings us closer to that moment, so we need to make the best possible use of the time we have left.

[6] That is right, 'weapons'. Light repels darkness. To make a difference, weapons must be used.

[7] Of course we have to eat and drink to maintain life and health; it is the abuse of these appetites that is in view; in fact, Paul's terminology indicates 'heavy' abuses.

[8] Right on! Those are precisely the attitudes that one often sees in such cases.

[9] Christ is the Master of the Church.

[10] In that event, the day of the week we decide to observe should not be made a matter of doctrine. Christians generally observe Sunday, Jews Saturday, Muslims Friday, but if someone prefers Tuesday, he should be free to do so. (Of course, if you want to hold a job, you had better go along with the requirements of the market place.)

[11] "And he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it" is omitted by 4.6% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding (it is an easy case of 'like ending').

to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8Because if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. 9For this very reason Christ both died and rose, and lived,[1] so as to rule both dead and living.[2]

The Judgment Seat of Christ

10But you, why do you judge your brother? And you too, why do you look down on your brother? Because we will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.[3] 11For it is written: "'As I live,' says the LORD, 'every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall acknowledge God.'"[4] 12So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. 13Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another, but rather resolve this: not to put a stumbling block or pitfall in a brother's way.

14I know and have been convinced by Sovereign Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself[5] (still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean), 15but if your brother is offended because of food, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not, with your food, ruin someone for whom Christ died. 16So do not let your good be slandered; 17because the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in Holy Spirit. 18For whoever serves the Christ in these things is satisfying to God and approved by men.[6]

19So then, let us pursue the things that promote peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are 'clean'; however it is wrong for the man who gives offense by eating. 21It is good not to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is weakened.[7]

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[1] Although seemingly out of sequence, I assume that the reference of "and lived" is to His earthly life—without the incarnation He could not have died and conquered death. However, the perceived difficulty was enough to lead perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts to omit "and rose", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc., except that they then make "and lived" refer to the resurrection.

[2] Most presentations of the Gospel I have heard revolve around the selfish interests of the hearers, what <u>they</u> are going to get out of it. But the clearest statements in Scripture giving the 'why' of the cross tell a different story. Here in 14:9 we have a very explicit one: He died to be **Lord**! 2 Corinthians 5:15 is also explicit: "He died for all so that those who now live should no longer live for themselves but for the One who died for all and was raised again." Philippians 2:8-11 refers to the final victory. Hebrews 2:14 refers to destroying Satan. How about preaching a Gospel that revolves around Christ's interests!

[3] 2.4% of the Greek manuscripts read "God" instead of "Christ", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[4] See Isaiah 45:23.

[5] For a Jew to say this, he had to be convinced by a higher power.

[6] That is, approved by men who fear God, not by those in rebellion against Him.

[7] "Or is offended, or is weakened" is omitted by 1.8% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

22Do you have faith? Have it privately before God. Happy is he who
does not judge himself in what he approves. 23But he who eats with
doubt stands condemned, because it is not from faith; for whatever is
not from faith is sin.[1]

Doxology

24Now to Him who has power to establish you according to my
Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation
of the mystery kept secret through long ages, 25but now revealed and
made known through the prophetic Scriptures,[2] according to the com-
mand of the eternal God, with a view to obedience of faith among all
ethnic nations 26—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ—to Him
be the glory forever! Amen.[3]

Summary

15 1Now we who are strong ought to bear with the limitations of the
weak, and not to please ourselves. 2Let each of us please the
neighbor with a view to what is good for edifying. 3Because even the
Christ did not please Himself; rather, as it is written: "The revilings of
those reviling you fell on me."[4] 4Whatever things were written before
were so written for our instruction,[5] so that through the fortitude and
the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5Now may the
God of that fortitude and that encouragement[6] grant you to be of the
same mind[7] among yourselves according to Christ Jesus, 6so that you
may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one heart
and voice.

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1 Well now, faith would appear to be a rather important commodity! But just why is everything else 'sin'? If the basic idea in 'sin' is to miss the mark, or to fall short (Romans 3:23), then faith is of the essence. Habakkuk 2:4, "the just shall live by faith", is repeated three times in the New Testament—Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. "That no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith'" (Galatians 3:11). So to depend on the law (or any equation based on works) is to fall short. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). If God demands faith, then anything else will fall short, will miss the mark.

2 Since it is being revealed 'only now', these 'prophetic Scriptures' must be New Testament writings, given by God!

3 5.2% of the Greek manuscripts place verses 24-26 at the end of the book, rather than here. Paul habitually places doxologies throughout his letters—they do not occur only at the end. However, the wording is exactly the same in both places. Almost all versions follow the 5%.

4 See Psalm 69:9.

5 Paul is referring to the OT, and we are supposed to be receiving instruction from it, which means that we are supposed to be reading it and paying attention to it.

6 God is the Source of the Scriptures.

7 It is only as a group of people are habitually exposed to the same Scriptures that 'the same mind' has much chance.

Glorify

7Therefore accept one another, just as the Christ also accepted us,[1]
to the glory of God. **8**Now I say that Christ Jesus[2] has become a minister
to the circumcised on behalf of God's truth, in order to confirm the pro-
mises to the fathers; **9**and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His
mercy,[3] as it is written: "For this reason I will give praise to you among
the Gentiles, O LORD,[4] and will sing psalms to your name."[5] **10**And again
He says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"[6] **11**And again: "Praise the
Lord, all you Gentiles, and laud Him, all you peoples!"[7] **12**And again,
Isaiah says: "The Root of Jesse will appear, even He who rises up to rule
over the nations; the Gentiles will place their hope on Him."[8] **13**Now may
the God of the hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,[9] so that
you may abound in that hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.[10]

Paul's mission

14Now I myself am really confident about you, my brothers, that you
yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to
admonish others.[11] **15**Nevertheless I have written to you quite boldly on
some points, brothers, as a reminder to you, because of the grace given
to me by God, **16**that I should be a minister of Jesus Christ to the nations,
serving the Gospel of God as a priest so that the Gentiles might become
an acceptable offering,[12] sanctified by Holy Spirit. **17**So in Christ Jesus I
do have a boast in things pertaining to God; **18**because I do not presume
to speak of anything except those things that Christ has accomplished
through me to make the Gentiles obedient—by word and deed, **19**by the
power of signs and wonders, by the power of God's Spirit, so that I have

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[1] Perhaps 40% of the Greek manuscripts read 'you', but the 60% includes the best line of transmission. The verb I have rendered as 'accept' can also mean 'receive'.

[2] "Jesus" is omitted by perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[3] We generally do not even trust someone who does not keep his promises, much less 'glorify' him. So it was necessary to fulfill the promises made to the patriarchs.

[4] Less than a third of the Greek manuscripts have "O LORD", but that third includes the best line of transmission, that follows the Hebrew Text of both 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49.

[5] See 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49.

[6] See Deuteronomy 32:43.

[7] See Psalm 117:1.

[8] See Isaiah 11:10.

[9] If one stops and thinks about it, 'joy' and 'peace' depend on believing—when we begin to doubt we lose both. Also, if you are filled with hope, you tend to have more 'bounce', you work with greater enthusiasm.

[10] To abound by the power presumably means that we are to be doing things by that power. One does not 'abound' by sitting still doing nothing.

[11] Instead of "others", some 7% of the Greek manuscripts read 'one another', as in most versions.

[12] The concept is interesting: Paul is a priest, and the nations are his offering. I habitually present my own work to God as an offering.

fully proclaimed[1] the Gospel of the Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.[2] 20It has always been my aim to evangelize where Christ has not been named, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation; 21rather, as it is written: "Those to whom He was not announced will see, and those who have not heard will understand."[3]

A visit to Rome

22That is why I have been hindered these many times from coming to you. 23But now, no longer having a place in these parts, and having a longing these many years to come to you, 24whenever I travel to Spain I will come to you.[4] Because I hope to see you while passing through, and to be sent on my way there by you, if I may first enjoy your company for a while.

25Now, however, I am traveling to Jerusalem, serving the saints. 26Because Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27Yes, they were pleased, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are also obligated to minister to them in physical things. 28So when I have finished this and have sealed to them this 'fruit', I will go by way of you to Spain.[5] 29And I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel[6] of the Christ.

30Now I implore you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in prayers to God on my behalf,[7] 31that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service to Jerusalem may be well received by the saints; 32so that I may come to you with joy by the will of God and be refreshed together with you. 33Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Closing remarks

Phoebe

16 1I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the congregation in Cenchrea, 2so that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever matter she may need from you; for indeed she herself has been a helper of many, including my own self.

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[1] Note the 'word and deed', the 'signs and wonders'. Can someone who has only 'word' claim to have 'fully proclaimed' the Gospel?

[2] Illyricum lies to the north of Macedonia, in what used to be Yugoslavia (a few decades ago).

[3] See Isaiah 52:15.

[4] "I will come to you" is omitted by 4.1% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[5] I am not aware of any record that Paul ever got to Spain.

[6] "Of the Gospel" is omitted by 3.7% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[7] If Paul needed prayer, how about us?

Greetings

3Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4who risked their own necks for my life;[1] to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the congregations of the Gentiles. 5And greet the congregation that is in their house.[2]

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the first convert to Christ from Achaia.[3] 6Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.[4] 7Greet Andronicus and Junias, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, and who were in Christ before me. 8Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. 9Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. 10Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. 11Greet Herodian, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. 12Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord.[5] 13Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, also his mother, and mine.[6] 14Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brothers who are with them. 15Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, also Olympus and all the saints who are with them.[7] 16Greet one another with a holy kiss. The congregations of Christ greet you.

Warning

17Now I exhort you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine you have learned, and avoid them. 18Because such people do not serve our Lord Jesus[8] Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.[9] 19I rejoice over you because your obedience has become known to all, but I want you to be wise as to what is good, yet

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[1] So far as I know, we do not have a record of just how, when or where this happened.

[2] In the beginning, congregations met in people's homes. This avoids the expense of erecting buildings. I believe the days are upon us when all serious followers of Jesus Christ will be increasingly persecuted, including in North America and Europe. An underground Church will have little use for 'buildings'.

[3] 4% of the Greek manuscripts read "Asia" instead of "Achaia" (these are very different places), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

[4] Although scarcely a fourth of the Greek manuscripts read "you" (instead of "us"), that fourth includes the best line of transmission.

[5] The three in this verse are women.

[6] If Rufus were his physical brother, presumably Paul would have expressed himself differently, so the 'mother' here is not literally Paul's.

[7] Since Paul had never been to Rome, so far, I wonder how he knew so many believers who were there (he knew them well enough to give details about them). I suppose most of them had migrated there from places Paul had been, and he would have to know about that migration.

[8] Some 13% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Jesus", as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[9] Guileless people are often not prepared to recognize guile in others. So those who are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the flock need to warn the people about who should be avoided.

innocent as to what is evil.[1] **20**The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet![2]

Sign off

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ[3] be with you. **21**Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my countrymen.

22I, Tertius, who penned this letter in the Lord, greet you. **23**Gaius, host to me and the whole congregation, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you, as does brother Quartus.[4]

24The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us[5] all! Amen.[6]

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[1] When the first pair ate of the forbidden tree, this was not the result.

[2] The sooner, the better!

[3] 1% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality) omit "Christ", to be followed by NIV and NASB—an inferior proceeding.

[4] One gains the clear impression that the people mentioned in verse 23 knew that Tertius was penning this letter. Not only that, they asked to be included! I wonder who Quartus may have been.

[5] I have followed perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in putting 'us' rather than the familiar 'you'. If verses 22-24 were not dictated by Paul, then the first person is especially appropriate, coming from Tertius.

[6] 3.2% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 24, while 7.2% supply 14:24-26 at this point, as in most versions.