

Now to Him who Is Able to Establish You Stability in Romans

What was Paul's main purpose in writing Romans?

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Just about any Christian who has spent time studying the Christian way of life has spent time in Romans chapters five through eight. These chapters reveal some key truths for the Christian life. They explain the existence of the sin nature, God's design for dealing with the sin nature, God's warning about the law and the sin nature, and God's ultimate plan for the believer. Yet many struggle to see the connection with the first four chapters and chapters nine through eleven. The first four chapters address universal guilt and God's work to provide salvation through faith. Chapters nine through eleven address God's present plan for the nation Israel. Are these sections connected? If so, what is the tie between the salvation of the lost and the believer's sin nature? How does the sin nature and God's plans for the believer tie to God's present plans for Israel? In a letter this size it is possible that Paul dealt with separate themes. It is also possible that these sections of Romans are connected and God planned a logical presentation of an essential truth for the Christian.

Paul wrote Romans while staying in Corinth late in AD 57 or early 58¹ (Romans 16:23; 2 Timothy 4:20). He had not yet visited Rome, though chapter sixteen indicates that he knew many of the people in the Roman assembly. He wished to visit them, confer a spiritual gift upon them and be sent on his way to Spain by them (Romans 1:10-11; 15:24, 28). It is likely that Phoebe carried this letter to the Romans saints and they were instructed to present themselves to her for whatever need she might have (Romans 16:1-2).² Phoebe would exercise her gift among the Roman saints, and that gift may have played a role in addressing Paul's primary purpose.

While Paul expressed his longing to come and see the Romans in 1:10, his purpose was to impart some spiritual gift so the Romans might be stabilized. This would result in mutual encouragement of the Romans and Paul. Paul mentioned this stability again in 16:25. Is the means of this stability mentioned elsewhere in this letter? According to 1:10, the impartation of a spiritual gift would provide the means for this stability. This spiritual gift could be a gift for service or another provision, e.g. a truth or truthful perspective regarding known truths..

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the connection between these varied sections in Romans. Paul wrote Romans to stabilize believers. He may also have had a secondary purpose of preparing the Roman saints for an evangelistic work. We'll consider the

¹ This is tentative, for a brief summary of dates see Bruce Corley and Curtis Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) p. 14.

² Paul called Phoebe a minister, a servant of the church in Cenchrea, the area of Corinth. She had the gift of organization and had used it for many, including Paul. Organization is the gift to see needs and point out those needs to those with the gift or ability to meet the needs.

intent of each section to better understand the tie between sections. Understanding the first and third sections of Romans will provide the reader a grasp of that unique fabric which is Scripture, knit by the Holy Spirit. Seeing Paul's intended connections between these sections will inform us regarding what Paul meant by stability.

Paul's Readers in Romans

Romans is a letter to believers. Paul addressed his readers as those among the called ones of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:6). He wrote that they are loved ones of God, called ones, saints, and objects of God's grace and peace (Romans 1:7). Paul closed the letter with a long series of personal greetings. Consider the following as examples of the saints. Phoebe was a sister and servant of the church at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1). Priscilla and Aquila were Paul's co-workers in Christ Jesus (Romans 16:3). Epaenetus was the first believer (firstfruit) of Asia (Romans 16:5). At the beginning we know that this letter is for saints. Paul closed the letter by addressing many saints by name. Romans is a letter for believers.

Romans also includes several sections in which Paul converses with an imagined individual or opponent. The Greeks called this a diatribe³ described by F.F. Bruce, "In which questions or objections are put into the mouth of an imagined critic in order to be answered or demolished."⁴ In 2:1 Paul used the Vocative case (the case of address), "You are inexcusable, O man." He continued addressing this individual in the second-person singular, "For in what you judge the other." In the remainder of chapter two, Paul used nine second-person pronouns, two vocatives, and twenty second-person verbs. Now, this in itself is not remarkable. Paul frequently addressed his audience in the second-person. However, these vocatives, pronouns and verbs are singular, that is, "You."⁵ Paul normally used plural pronouns, vocatives, and verbs to address an assembly (Romans 1:8, 11, 12). The exceptions are when his letters were written to an individual rather than a whole assembly, or a brief comment in a letter to an individual (e.g. 1 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 10, 11; Philippians 4:3).

What is remarkable is that to this individual in Romans two, Paul made such statements as, "But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up for yourself wrath in a day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgment" (Romans 2:5). Elsewhere, Paul assured believers that we are not the objects of wrath and have been saved from the coming wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1:10). Even in this very letter, Paul assured his readers that they would be saved from the wrath (Romans 5:9). Therefore, in this context, the statements addressed to this person must be either an unsaved individual in the Roman assembly or a fictional individual created by Paul for the purpose of making a point.

3 Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) p. 46. This must be distinguished from the modern use of diatribe which is a harsh argument or castigation of a point of view.

4 F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1978 reprint) p. 86.

5 Paul used 90 vocative plural nouns in all his letters (Romans-Hebrews). He used 26 vocative singular nouns and of these 15 are addressed to individuals other than God or some inanimate object (i.e. death). In his letters he used 173 second person singular pronouns "you," while 744 second person plural pronouns. Second person singular verbs occur 244 times and 624 second person plural verbs.

Unlike modern churches, the unsaved were not frequently or normally present among the assembly of believers. In 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 Paul used subjunctive verbs⁶ to indicate the potential but not real presence of unbelievers in the assembly. It is not likely that Paul was addressing an unsaved individual in the Roman assembly, because even if such an individual were present, he or she would not be considered part of the assembly. For this reason, it is best to understand that Paul created a fictional individual in order to make a point.

I am eager to evangelize for you in Rome (Paul wished to evangelize)

So, why does Paul address an unsaved individual in this letter addressed to saints? Paul planned to come and evangelize in Rome. If the verb “evangelize” refers to the presentation of Christ’s saving work for the unsaved, and verse sixteen appears to support this, then the pronoun *ujmi/vn* is a Dative of Advantage.⁷ Verse fifteen can then be translated, “In this way, as far as I’m concerned, I am eager to evangelize for you in Rome.” Paul didn’t evangelize believers with the good news for initial salvation. Paul would have carried out evangelization for the benefit of the Roman saints. As F.F. Bruce noted, Paul would then be speaking with an imagined unsaved individual. Paul’s imagined conversation demonstrated for the sake of the Roman believers, how he dealt with unsaved people when presenting the good news of salvation. Paul’s presentation agrees with Luke’s record of Paul’s message in Acts 13.

Many commentators on Romans assume Paul’s main focus is evangelization. John Witmer noted that Paul had three purposes in writing: to inform the Romans of his hope to visit them, to “present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel message he proclaimed,” to address tensions between the Jewish and Gentile believers.⁸ So, while Witmer sees some of Romans as a statement of Paul’s gospel, he recognizes other purposes. In the same paragraph, Witmer wrote that Paul did in Romans what Jude had hoped to do, though circumstances required Jude to write a different letter. This assumes that Jude’s “common salvation” (Jude 1:3) was primarily about the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:3&4 summarizes the good news for initial salvation. It states that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again. This was done according to the Scriptures. In Acts, Luke recorded two gospel presentations in some detail. In Acts 10 he recorded Peter’s message to the household of Cornelius. In Acts 13, he recorded Paul’s message in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. Both messages were addressed to people who had some background in the Old Testament. Cornelius had connections with the Jews and Paul’s audience were synagogue attenders. Both men presented the good news in such a manner that it tied Christ to an historical people, with the God of their history, and real historical events. Both men presented a hope with this good news: forgiveness and justification. The hope became the object of faith. Both messages confronted the hearers with the guilt of Christ’s crucifixion. Luke’s account in Acts provides an expanded look at the gospel summarized in 1

⁶ The subjunctive represents possibility, while the indicative indicates reality.

⁷ James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MA.: University Press of America, 1979) p. 31.

⁸ John A. Witmer, *Romans* in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983) pp. 436-437.

Corinthians 15.

In Acts 14, Luke recorded Paul and Barnabas' arrival in Lystra. Unlike Paul's previous message, this one was shorter. He was no longer speaking to Jews but Gentiles. He charged them to turn from their god's which could do nothing,⁹ and turn to the living God who had made all creation (Acts 14:15). This God, though allowing the Gentiles to go their own way, left a witness of His goodness. Paul's words to Gentiles bear resemblance to his words to Gentiles on Mars Hill (sans philosophical distraction). In this context, Paul said he was evangelizing them.

Since, Paul did elaborate on the gospel, it is possible that Paul wrote Romans as a pre-evangelistic letter, intending to come to Rome and evangelize. Chapters one through four could present the points Paul used. Certainly Paul would have engaged in evangelism upon arriving in Rome. According to Philippians, he did evangelize even when chained. Yet, Paul listed many individuals in chapter sixteen that he already knew. These would likely have already heard how Paul approached evangelism (e.g. Prisca and Aquila Romans 16:3; Acts 18:1-4, 24-26). Therefore, while Paul had some evangelistic intentions in the first chapters of Romans, many of the Roman believers had little or no need of such work.

That I might impart a spiritual gift (Paul wished to impart a gift.)

Paul's wish to evangelize in Rome and beyond was not his first wish. Two sentences earlier, in 1:11, he wrote, "For I long to see you, that I might impart a spiritual grace gift to you, that you might be stabilized." His first longing was for the Roman saints themselves. Paul was balanced, he won people to the Lord, but he also then longed for their growth and stability.

To stabilize the Roman believers, Paul wanted them to have a gift. Commentators are not agreed as to the nature of this gift. Some have concluded that as an apostle, Paul might lay hands on an individual or individuals and confer a supernatural ability to serve, and this is what he intended to do. Others believe that Paul's presence as an apostle was a gift, and that with the passing of Paul, the Scriptures now serve this purpose.¹⁰ Some give little attention to the statement about stability, and focus only on Paul's wish to evangelize and appear to make that the gift.

Paul used the word *charisma* [carisma] and the word *pneumatika* [pneumatika], which our English Bibles translate "spiritual gift." The first word emphasizes a result or product of grace.¹¹ We might translate it "grace gift." In Ephesians 4 Paul used this word of the gifts of the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors even teachers (v. 11). He also used it in Romans 12:6 of seven areas of service. The second word is an adjective which means that which is characterized by or expresses spirit. Whether spirit is the Holy Spirit or human spirit must be determined by the context (cf Galatians 6:1 and Romans 7:14). Paul wished to impart a

⁹ This is the emphasis of Paul's *μᾶταιος*, vain or empty regarding result, or unable to produce.

¹⁰ William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse* (Chicago: Grace Publications, 1943) pp. 12-13

¹¹ The *-μα* ending emphasizes product or result. See Chamberlain on the .

benefit of grace which is related to the Spirit/spirit.

The word *charisma* occurs in sixteen passages. The word describes serving gifts, popularly known as spiritual or charismatic gifts, in ten of these passages (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10). Four of the remaining passages are in Romans. In 5:15 and 16 the *charisma* is the reversal of spiritual death. This idea is again described in 6:23 with the clarification that eternal life is the gracious gift of God. Paul explained that God's gracious gifts are given without regret¹² (11:29). Therefore, though most of the occurrences of this term refer to service gifts, four occurrences in Romans refer to the work of God. So, in Romans most of the occurrences of *charisma* involve New Testament salvation.

The second word *pneumatikos* is more frequent and diverse in usage. *Pneumatikos* is used of service gifts only in 1 Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1. The other twenty-four passages do not plainly refer to gifts of service. Besides Romans 1:11 it is used in Romans of the law (7:14) and the benefits or provisions ministered by the Jewish believers to the Gentiles (15:27). Outside of Romans it describes the personal character of believers (1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1; 14:37; Galatians 6:1), God's truths and words (1 Corinthians 2:13; Ephesians 1:3; 5:19), of the believer's future body (1 Corinthians 15:44, 46), among other uses. *Pneumatikos* has diverse meanings.

To what spirit the word *pneumatikos* refers must be determined by the context. The law pertains to or appeals to the believer's spirit, as opposed to his soul (Romans 7:14). The believer's future body will be characterized by the human spirit rather than the human soul (spiritual versus soulish (natural); 1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul applied to fallen spirit beings "spiritual evil" in the heavens (Ephesians 6:12). The good things God says about the believer appeal to or are appreciated by the believer in the realm of his spirit (Ephesians 1:3). The Holy Spirit gives character to certain believers through His work, hence they are spiritual: taught by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1); expressing His fruit (Galatians 6:1); possessing an ability for service (1 Corinthians 12:1; 14:1). Spiritual does not automatically refer to the work of the Holy Spirit, context must determine which is meant.

I propose that Paul desired to give the Roman believers a benefit of grace which they could appreciate and benefit from in the realm of their spirit. His goal was the stability of the Roman saints. According to his statement in Romans 16:25, that stability or firmness would be accomplished by God in accord with Paul's gospel. The impartation of a service gift would not bring about this stability. This interpretation fits the theme in the book of Romans and the historical situation we observe regarding serving gifts. The gift which they could apprehend in their spirit and by which they become firm, was a truth, set of truths, or connection of truths.

That you may be established

Two Greek words are used in the New Testament to express stability. The *bebaioß* family

¹² The NASB, ESV, NIV and NRSV translates this "irrevocable"; KJV, AV, and Darby use some version of repent. *ἀμεταμέλητος* is "not repented of, unregretted" G. Abbott-Smith *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1948) p. 24.

was used in New Testament times of that which was sure, valid or legally guaranteed.¹³ Paul used this word twice in Romans to describe the certainty of God's promise and the good news announced to the fathers (Romans 4: 16; 15:8). In both cases, it the firmness of a legal promise which God has made. The word we are examining is part of the στερεός word family. The NASB, ASV, NKJV, Darby and Wuest translate this word "establish", the A.V. "stablish", the ESV "strengthen", the NIV "make you strong" and "establish." In Romans 16:25 A.T. Robertson translated it "to stablish" and explains, "to make stable."¹⁴ described that which is solid, hard or stiff, as in the foundation of God (2 Timothy 2:19).¹⁵ Paul used this word twice in Romans and in both occurrences, he applied it to individuals. It occurs as the verb *sthri+zw* in Romans. J. Stegenga classified this verb under *i^{sthmi}* a verb meaning to stand.¹⁶ The *i+zw* ending of this verb is active causative.¹⁷ G. Abbot-Smith's definition reflects the causative idea, "to fix, set fast, make fast."¹⁸ Mounce's Expository Dictionary adds the metaphorical idea, "to render *mentally steadfast, to settle, confirm.*"¹⁹ The derived idea is to cause to stand with the added idea of strength or firmness. We can translate it with some idea of standing firmly or solidly.

sthri+zw occurs in Romans 1:11 and 16:25. Both passages appear to involve mental stability. The statement in 16:25 agrees with 1:11, that Paul desired the stability of the Roman saints and knew how it could be accomplished. In 16:25 God is "the one who is able to establish you." The preposition *kata* occurs twice in this verse. Paul used it in connection with the Accusative case, thinking of a standard, as we would think of building by a metric standard. Three things are the standard by which God would establish them, Paul's gospel, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, and the revelation of a mystery.

According to my gospel

Bible interpreters tend to generalize. While warned to consider words in their context, larger theological themes are often treated in an homogenous manner. The word gospel is a good example. A survey of commentators on Romans demonstrates the idea that gospel nearly always refers to the message announced to the unsaved, imploring them to believe. However, the New Testament mentions gospels in several passages which do not fit the idea of initial salvation.²⁰ Jesus Christ and John the baptizer announced two gospels, one about the kingdom of God and another about the kingdom from the heavens (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15). God

13 H. Schlier in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* ed. Geoffrey Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing, 1985) p. 103.

14 A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931) p. 430.

15 W.E. Vine *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (McLean Virginia, MacDonald Publishing Company, nd) p. 443.

16 J. Stegenga *The Greek-English Analytical Concordance of the Greek New Testament*, Jackson, MS: Hellenes-English Biblical Foundation, 1963) p. 376

17 Though this classification is not recognized by all, A.T. Robertson noted that verbs in this form sometimes have a causative idea. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915) p. 149. Without attempting to force causation upon every occurrence it does appear frequently to be valid.

18 Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 418.

19 *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, ed. William Mounce, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) p. 1275.

20 See L.S. Chafer *Systematic Theology Vol. VII*, (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) pp. 175-177 in which he mentions multiple gospels and cites C.I. Scofield's explanation of four of these gospels.

announced a good news to Abraham about his future seed (Galatians 3:8). Israel heard a good news about entering the land (Hebrews 4:6). We now have good news promising us rest from our efforts to approach God (Hebrews 4:2). Believers can know the good news which provides peace between saints in the body (Ephesians 6:15). Paul had time in Thessalonica to also announce to them the gospel of God (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2, 8). Three references to a gospel are related, the stabilizing gospel in Romans 16, a mystery gospel for which Paul desired boldness (Ephesians 6:19), and the gospel of the happy God (1 Timothy 1:11). Because several gospels are mentioned, it is necessary to discern by context which message is intended.

Paul's gospel is related to a mystery. The gospel in Ephesians 6:19 was a mystery. That gospel can not be the good news announced to unsaved men. That message was no mystery. That message was revealed in prophetic passages such as Psalm 22, 69; and Isaiah 53. The week before His death and resurrection, Christ announced that gospel to His disciples (Luke 18:31-34). Paul announced Christ's death and resurrection with great boldness, but he asked for boldness to announce the mystery good news in Ephesians 6:19. His gospel and that for the unsaved, are two distinct messages for separate audiences.

Paul's gospel combined several truths to affect the Christian's way of life. It combined the truth that the believer is in Christ, that God makes no distinctions between believers in Christ, that God will finish the work in the believer which He began, that the believer is to live with respect to God's grace (not law), and that God is a happy God. These realities and others should result in a different attitude toward life, and therefore, a different way of life.

According to...the proclamation concerning Jesus Christ

"Preaching" is often associated with style and pulpit presence. For many, good preaching means the speaker modulates his voice, uses appropriate gestures, cries when necessary, tells us joke when necessary, and pounds the pulpit when necessary. Yet the Greek word laid emphasis on the content and the approach to the content. *kh/rugma* is the message or the result (*ma* ending noun) of authoritatively announcing. The verb is *khru/ssw*. These words express the work of a herald, one who officially announces. Duly authorized, a herald announces and makes no apology for the announcement; he does not present options nor does he enter into dialogue. None of this involves the issue of technique, but lays emphasis upon the content of the message being accurately presented. The herald is not free to digress, or take liberties with the message. He must set before his audience exactly what the one sending him has given to him. This is why the "preacher" must give adequate time and attention to knowing what the Bible says. Biblical "preaching" is primarily if not solely about the content or message announced.

The content of Paul's message in Romans 16:25 is Jesus Christ. The interpretation and implications of 2 Corinthians 4:4 & 6 is that the unsaved have some deficiency in their understanding of who Jesus Christ is. As a result they are those who are perishing, coming to ruin. Sadly, many believers also have deficiencies in their understanding of who Jesus Christ is. While the gospel announced to the unsaved clarifies what one must know about Jesus Christ, it does not say everything about Christ that can be said. The believer must have the former but may lack the latter. The New Testament reveals much more which has value for the believer,

truths by which he may grow. The believer isn't coming to ruin for lack of this knowledge, but he may not grow and may lack stability.

Paul wrote several truths about Jesus Christ to the Romans. The Old Testament prophets prophesied of Him (1:2). In His humanity (flesh) Jesus Christ is descended from David (1:3). Boundaries were set down to make Him known as the Son of God (1:4). His status as Son of God is seen by *the* Spirit of holiness from a resurrection out from dead ones (1:4). Through Him, Paul had received grace and his apostolic gift and commissioning (1:5). God will judge the secret things through Jesus Christ (2:16). God has provided a liberating redemption [ἀόπολυ/ trwsiß] in Christ (3:24). Christ is the location where God is satisfied regarding sin (3:25). He was delivered for our trespasses (4:25). He was raised that we might be declared righteous (4:25). We have peace facing God through Him (5:1). He is our access to grace (5:2). Christ died for us while we were still ungodly and sinners (5:6, 8). We will be saved through Him from the wrath (5:9). We have been reconciled to God through His death (5:10). We will be saved by His life (5:10). He is the means by which God extended to us His grace and the gift by grace (5:15). Grace reigns through Him because of (causal eiß, 5:21). He is the sphere into which the believer has been placed (baptized): placed into His death, buried with Him, connected with His resurrection (6:3-4). We have died to the sin *nature* in close union (sun) with Christ (6:8). Since He rose from the dead, death has no authority (lit. can not lord over, kurieu/w) over Him (6:9). Jesus Christ died (while physically alive on the cross)²¹ to the sin *nature*, but now lives to God (6:10). The believer is logically count himself to be a dead one to the sin *nature* and a living one to God, and this is true of him in Christ (6:11). In²² Christ Jesus God extends to the believer His gracious gift of eternal life (6:23). The believer died to the Law through the body of Christ (7:4). There is no condemnation for the one in Christ Jesus (8:1). Christ is in the believer (8:10). We are joint-heirs with Christ (8:17). We are being conformed to His image (8:29). Christ Jesus died, is raised, is at God's right hand, and intercedes for us (8:34). God loves the believer in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:39). Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for the one believing (10:4). Jesus is Deity (Lord, 10:9, 10). The believers are one body in Christ (12:5). The believer can put on the Lord Jesus Christ (13:14). The believer should live to/for the Lord (14:6-8). Jesus Christ became Lord of the living and dead²³ (14:9). Christ died on behalf of/in place of (uper) all believers, even one who is experiencing ruin (ἀόπο/llumi, 14:15). One can serve Christ as a slave by pursuing righteousness, peace and joy as opposed to his individual rights (14:17-18). Christ

21 "The sin here does not refer to acts of sin. ...Here he speaks of the relation of Christ's death to the sinful nature of the individual. *Our Lord's death not only paid the penalty of human sin, but it was used of God to break the power of indwelling sin in the believer's life.*" Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955) p. 104. William R. Newell distinguished this passage from Paul's words in chapter three. "Christ is seen dying to sin, not for it, here" He then correctly ties it to 2 Corinthians 5:21. *Romans Verse by Verse*, (Chicago: Grace Publications, 1943) p. 221.

22 1 John 5:11 explains that eternal life is had by having the Son. Therefore, εἰς may be used in two ways. Paul may that the life is in Christ, and by having Christ in us, we share in that life. If Paul is using "in Christ Jesus our Lord" with the common idea of our position, then he is contrasting the believer operating in his sin nature with its pay of death, versus the believer operating in Christ Jesus our Lord and experiencing God's gracious benefit. Eternal life can only be experienced as the believer set his frame of mind to his position in Christ. This is Christ's words about the Vine and branches in John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who is abiding in Me and I in him, this one bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

23 Verses 8 & 9 indicate that "the living and the dead" both refer to believers.

did not please Himself (15:3). Christ received the believer without regard to his issues (15:6). Christ has become a servant with reference to the circumcision to confirm the promises made to the fathers (15:8). Paul had a boast in Christ Jesus (15:17). Christ can work through the believer (15:18). There are good things said (about the believer?) regarding Christ (15:29). Believers can be co-workers, and approved in addition to simply being in Christ (16:3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). This extensive list is compiled only from facts Paul mentions in the letter to the Romans. These facts are part of the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

These truths have several effects for the believer. He is free from the law because of his relation in the body of Christ (7:4). The Spirit works out real freedom for the believer from the frustrating principle [law] of the sin nature and *spiritual* death (8:2). He does this in Christ Jesus, that is, as the believer sets his mind to who he is in Christ Jesus. The believer should present his body to God as a sacrifice (12:1-2). The body is the avenue through which the believer will serve others. The believer should have the same frame of mind towards other believers, measured by the standard of Christ who didn't please Himself (15:5). Believers should receive one another like Christ received them (15:6). Christ received believers with no strings attached. They simply believed what He had accomplished. Believers who guard their personal rights over the needs of brothers are not serving Christ and cause unnecessary divisions (16:17-18). This again indicates that a believer can and should be a slave of Christ by putting the needs of others before his own personal wishes or rights.

According to the revelation of the Mystery

A mystery is a truth which was planned by God in eternity, but was kept silent or secret until the time God chose to reveal it. Romans 16:25 agrees with this, "having been kept silent in times in eternity." Paul repeats this idea with variation in Ephesians 3:9 and Colossians 1:26. From man's perspective, when the mystery is revealed, that mystery is a new truth.

The New Testament reveals several mysteries. Jesus spoke mysteries regarding the kingdoms. John revealed mysteries regarding the Churches and God in Revelation. Paul revealed mysteries about the relationship of the Church to Christ, the believer's future transformation, God's plans for Israel, and the future man of lawlessness. Paul said that he was like a manager (steward) of the mysteries (note the plural) from God (1 Corinthians 4:1). The Bible student must discern by the context the content of each mystery he finds mentioned in Scripture, for more than one mystery exists.

In Romans 16:25, one of these mysteries plays a key role in stabilizing the believer. Paul combined his gospel and the proclamation with one kata preposition and the conjunction kai (and). Paul used a separate kata preposition with "*the* revelation of a mystery." The mystery summarizes the point of Paul's gospel and the proclamation of Christ.

One of those mysteries explains that all believers today are on equal footing in Christ. This mystery is related to the dispensation of grace, which itself is a mystery (Ephesians 3:2, 9). Paul called this "the mystery of the Christ" (Ephesians 3:4). In the context of Ephesians 3, "the Christ" refers to Jesus Christ and His body seen as one (cf Ephesians 2:15 "one new man";

1 Corinthians 12:12). All distinctions are erased or are of no effect in that new man. It is in Christ that there is no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female, but all the believers are one man (the seed, Galatians 3:28). In Ephesians 3:6 Paul explained the significance of this mystery. Gentile²⁴ believers are equal heirs with the Jewish believers. They are all joint-members of the body. They are joint-partakers of the promise of access to God in Christ (cf. Ephesians 3:12). While the Old Testament prophesied of God's future work among Gentiles, it never hinted at Gentiles being treated as equals with Israel. This agrees with the definition of a mystery; it was a new truth. Now, under God's present work all believers are equal, without regard to their ethnicity or former religion.

Stability by the application of these three truths.

God stabilizes the believer. The believer does not stabilize himself. However, the believer does play a part in that stabilization. He must learn and relate to these three sets of truths. Paul's gospel tells him that God has made all believers (since Pentecost) one body and equal. The proclamation of Jesus Christ emphasized who He is, what He has accomplished, and who He is now for the believer. This all has the quality of being a mystery. It was new. The Jewish element of the Roman Church (or all the Church) could not turn to their Scriptures (the Old Testament) and find these truths revealed. The Old Testament did not present Jesus Christ in the manner under consideration. If a believer will be stabilized, it will come about by knowing that all believers stand on equal footing in Christ, that Jesus Christ is his righteousness and standing, and that the believer is therefore, not condemned, and not in danger of being condemned. His conduct or the conduct of other believers will not alter his salvation. He cannot find this in the old revelation. It was new given through Paul.

This message is what Paul wished to impart to the Romans (1:11). This is the benefit of grace. It is mentally apprehended by the believer in the realm of his spirit, so Paul called it spiritual. It is not a sensory truth which may be observed or felt. It is a reality which God says exists and the believer must accept as true. This benefit of grace is the standard by which God would stabilize the Romans saints.

The Rest of Romans in Light of Paul's Goal

After Paul introduced his goal for the Romans, he began an extended section in which he portrayed the lost state of man. Leon Morris states the common opinion regarding Romans 1:18-3:20, "Paul is about to expound a wonderful salvation. But first he established the need for it by showing that all people are sinful."²⁵ Morris and many others are correct in part. Paul did express his intention to evangelize, and the following section certainly establishes the guilt of all men. However, this section also serves a part in his first purpose of stabilizing saints.

Believers are forgiven their sins and trespasses (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7). However, not all believers have grasped the magnitude of their previous state. They know that they would have perished apart from faith in Christ. Just as believers may not know all they

²⁴ The descriptions "Gentile" and "Jewish" refer to the individuals' pre-salvation origin, not the current status, for they are neither in Christ.

²⁵ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988) p. 73.

should about Jesus Christ, so they may not fully know the seriousness of their state prior to salvation. Robert Gromacki approached the issue of eternal security with two opening chapters. The first answers the question What Does it Mean to be Lost? and the second What does it mean to be saved?²⁶ Some believers struggle with eternal security because their response to these two questions is inadequate. Some believers think they were perhaps better than others, that it may have taken less to save them than to save others, or that because of their heritage, they had a better start. The opening chapters of Romans demonstrated that humanity in general, the moralist and then Jew in particular are all guilty. Paul did not establish their guilt in connection with Adam as he did in chapter five. He demonstrated their guilt by their actions.

Paul broke his argument into three parts: the remainder of chapter one, 2:1-16 and 2:17-3:20. The first section established universal guilt in an historical setting. The events to which Paul referred were at a time when men experientially knew (ginw_zskw) God, but did not give Him His reputation (glorify, 1:21). Paul traced man's downward spiral into idolatry, immorality and eventually not even finding it acceptable to have God in their experiential thoughts (e'pi+gnwsiß, 1:24, 26, 28). Paul stated that at each stage, God turned them (mankind) over, until eventually they had filled full all areas of unrighteousness (1:29-31). In Noah's day God stated that His Spirit would not always strive [judge, Nyî;d] with man. God's Spirit was striving or judging mankind so as to restrain their unrighteousness. He ceased and after the flood mankind began this quick descent. God did not force man down into depravity, for each step involved man's willful strain against God's restraint. Therefore, Romans 1:17-32 covers the time from the flood up to or contemporaneous with the call of Abraham. This first section then encompasses all of humanity before God made any distinctions by calling Abraham.

Therefore, you are without excuse

The second section begins in Romans 2:1. Commentators are divided as to whether this section addresses Jews or moral, religious hypocrites. Corley & Vaughn, Denney, Morris, Pettingill, Stifler, Vine, and Wuest take the first position. Bruce, Newell, Phillips, and Witmer take the second. Dale Spurbeck outlined the 2:1-16, "The Account Concerning The Condemnation of the Gentiles." and 2:17-3:8 as dealing with the Jews.²⁷ F.F. Bruce saw this as addressing the moralist in general and as 2:17 indicates, the Jewish moralist in particular.²⁸ Newell classified these two groups as "respectable sinners." The first consider themselves better based on "race, civilization, environment, education, or culture"²⁹ and the second are better "because of their religion."³⁰ This latter group he considered to be Jews. In a similar fashion, Witmer looks at these through God's truthfulness (2:1-4) and impartiality (2:5-11).³¹ John Phillips handles 2:1-16 as referring to all hypocrites, and 2:17-3:8 as the Hebrews

26 Robert G. Gromacki, *Salvation is Forever*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973).

27 Dale R. Spurbeck, introduction and outline for Bible Analysis 224, 1988 at Dispensational Theological Seminary.

28 Bruce, op cit. pp. 86-87.

29 Newell, op cit. p. 53.

30 ibid.

31 Witmer, op cit. pp. 444-445.

specifically.³² This second section does address hypocritical moralists, which leads naturally to addressing the Jews.

In Paul's second section, we come across 2:7-10. These verses are both important and confusing to the average reader. "This is one of the most difficult sections in Romans, because on the surface it seems to teach that salvation is by works; that eternal life can be earned by patient continuing in well-doing."³³ Most evangelical commentators pause here to address this question. W.E. Vine reminds the reader, "Now (1) the subject of the whole passage is not the means of obtaining eternal life, but the righteous judgment of God against man's sin, and in this respect what is mentioned in verses 8 and 9, as to the punishment of those who do not obey the truth, is perfectly consistent with the rest of Scripture on the subject. 'He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on Him' (John 3:36)."³⁴ Therefore, Paul wrote these verses under the heading of judgment, and judgment is how they must be interpreted.

Many attempt to make Paul's comments refer to the character of those who have believed (i.e. post-conversion) versus those who have not. A simpler interpretation agrees with Romans 3:9-18 where Paul drew the conclusion that there are none righteous, not even one. No one does the good mentioned in verses seven and ten. Verses seven and eight indicate that more is involved than just the good works versus disobedience. God also judges motives as the basis of works. He asserted in 2:16 that God will bring the hidden things of men to light when He judges.³⁵ Therefore, the good works are done in the context of patience, while seeking God's glory (reputation), honor and incorruption (Romans 2:7).³⁶ This contrasts to those in chapter one who did not give God His due reputation and honor, and worshipped corruptible creatures as god. Even the moral good works of man are done from selfish ambition (Romans 2:8). No one seeks anything for God. Paul's conclusion is that no one does good works based on proper motivation.

God's judgment is impartially applied to both Jew and Greek (Romans 2:10-11). Jews who flagrantly violate the law are judged. Moral Jews are also judged, because their moral good works are rooted in selfish motives. Greeks who flagrantly act in disobedience to the Truth are judged. Moral Greeks are also judged, for the same reason as the moral Jew. The moralist, whether Jew or Greek, stands just as guilty before the bar as the openly depraved people of chapter one.

When God judges mankind, He will do so by the standard [kata] of Paul's good news (2:16). We have briefly considered Paul's good news mentioned in 16:25. He also used the expression "my gospel" in 2 Timothy 2:8, in which he said that Christ is raised. The resurrected

32 John Phillips, *Exploring Romans* (Chicago: Mood Press, 1969) p. 35.

33 *ibid*, pp. 41-41.

34 W.E. Vine, *The Collected Writings of W.E. Vine*, Vol 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson 1996) p. 338.

35 Compare this with 1 Corinthians 4:1-4 in which God (Jesus Christ) will also evaluate the motives of believer's good works.

36 These could also be that which the man seeks for himself.

living Christ is the common denominator in Paul's messages. The modern evangelical emphasizes Christ's death for sins, and perhaps due to the thrust of Reformation theology, appears to think that our job is to convince the unsaved of his totally lost and depraved state. Reading Acts, one finds that Paul (present text excepted) spent most of his time presenting the resurrected Christ as did Peter. It might be said that the resurrection is what rendered this a good news. When Paul stood on Mars Hill, he tied the resurrection of Christ (the point of contention) with God's plan to judge mankind (Acts 17:31). The standard is that of a resurrected man who is the judge of the living and dead, and Lord of the living and dead saints.

All are under sin

Beginning in 2:16 Paul addressed the Jew directly. The Jews were persuaded that they were guides to the blind (2:19). Paul, having been a Jew and knowing a chief weakness, pointed out that they failed to practice what they taught (2:21-22). The Jew (by birth), who is a Jew within his heart, is a real Jew (2:28-29). Like 2:7-11, 3:9-17 could be applied to prove that no such Jew exists. Paul concluded that both the Jew and Greek are under sin (3:9).

All of this, 1:18-3:20, demonstrated God's righteousness regarding His judgment of sinful man. At every step, man's actions, motives and attitudes reinforced that God is righteous to judge them (3:5-8). God is righteous. The judgment against mankind is righteous and deserved (3:8).

Beginning in 3:21 Paul drew attention to another facet of God's righteousness.³⁷ This facet of God's righteousness is through faith concerning Jesus Christ (3:22). It is acquired by all who believe, with no difference. Because Paul had already demonstrated that all mankind, Jew or Greek, are under sin, it is natural to see that if God extends righteousness, it too can be on an equal basis. In this context, 3:23 looks back at the single unified sin of humanity³⁸ and man's ongoing lack with reference to God's glory. The sin is not that of each individual at some point in time, but that which took place in Adam. Newell explained, "While it is true, as both the old Version and the Revised translate, that "all have sinned"; yet I am more and more persuaded that in as much as the Spirit of God uses in verse 23 the same Greek word and tense as in Chapter 5:12. *hēmarton*: that is, "all *sinned*" (aorist, not perfect tense), God is looking back even here at Adam's federal headship involving us all."³⁹ Regarding God's glory, Witmer points out, "This single Greek verb is in the present tense, stressing continuing actions. It can be translated "keep on falling short."⁴⁰ Unsaved men, without regard to culture, religion, or morality still do not give God His proper weight or reputation. In fact in chapter five Paul pointed out man's hostility toward God (5:8, 10). For this reason Paul could say there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. All who are declared righteous as a gift by God's grace started on the same guilty footing. No one was less guilty, no one was more, and all were declared righteous through faith.

37 In both 1:17 and 3:21 *δικαιοσύνη* is anarthrous.

38 He does this by use of the Aorist as again in 5:12. See Witmer, p. 450.

39 Newell, op cit. pp. 112-113.

40 Witmer, op cit, p. 451.

God redeems and justifies the believer in Christ. We are not declared righteous separate from Christ but in Christ. “In Christ” is the great leveling position of believers. We noted above the many earthly positions which do not exist in Christ. The believer is made God’s kind of righteousness in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). That righteousness is the same for all believers in Christ. No mention is made of varying degrees of righteousness. The price was paid, applied, and God’s righteousness given.

Paul elaborated on faith in chapter four. It is faith alike for all. God declares righteous the ungodly who believe rather than work (4:5). The word ungodly (ἀόσεbh/β) meant one who does not honor God or even dishonors God.⁴¹ God doesn’t justify good, righteous, or godly people, but people who dishonored Him. In reality, there are none of the others apart from salvation. This is why God operates through faith alone. The ungodly have nothing else.

Paul used three situations from three different times to illustrate the appropriateness of faith. Abraham was declared righteous through faith before the Law (4:1-5). David was declared righteous apart from works while living under law (4:6-8). We, who have believed on the one who raised Jesus our Lord, are also counted righteous through faith (4:23-24). God declared Abraham righteous when Abraham was not circumcised. Circumcision added nothing to faith, therefore, God extends this righteousness through faith, so that it can be by the standard of grace (4:16). Stability is based on understanding faith alone.

That you may be established...I am eager to evangelize Paul’s Two Purposes in Romans 1-4

In the opening chapters of Romans, Paul’s primary purpose was to prove to believers, that we were all on the same ground coming into salvation.⁴² None needed saving more than others, or less than others. Man’s guilt is in actions and attitude equally born by all. Grasping this contributes to stability, because God stabilizes believers. Believers do not stabilize themselves. To be stabilized one must come to grips with the fact that we brought nothing into our relationship with God. No one “gave his life to Christ.” Apart from accepting this fact, the believer will always attempt, at least in part, to base his stability on who he was coming into salvation. This stability was Paul’s main purpose, and “You, O man” need to know where you started.

We have peace facing God

Romans 5 opens with a tie between justification [declaration of righteousness] and peace with God (v. 1). From Romans 3:20 to 5:1 Paul explained that faith is the human avenue through which God declares men righteous. No one is righteous by their works, even law type

41 The noun σέβω and its cognates εὐσεβεία and εὐσεβέω describe the activity of honoring a deity. We honor God by living out what God has given to us as part of our salvation, cf 1 Timothy 3:16.

42 Chapters 1-4 may also serve Paul’s secondary purpose of evangelizing. The Roman assembly probably had few unsaved visitors. Being of “the Way,” was unpopular and dangerous. Rome would eventually authorize persecution, imprisonment and death of confessed believers. For those who had not heard Paul evangelize, reading these chapters may have aided them when they announced the Lord Jesus Christ.

of works. Therefore, since God declares men righteous through faith, it is by a grace standard. This is a basis for peace.

The believer has⁴³ peace with God. The preposition “with” is *proß* [*pros*]. It is “with” in the sense that one is facing another. Paul is not speaking of a general peace with God. Thomas Schreiner has described this peace or its result as friendship. “Apparently, Jesus must die in place of sinners to satisfy God’s justice before friendship can be restored.”⁴⁴ However, this is more than friendship, it involves a relationship before God. 5:2 reveals this peace to involve access through Christ because of⁴⁵ grace and having a boast through Christ.

The words “through Christ” look beyond the believer’s position. The believer is in Christ. Both the grace and the boast are facing God. The believer is able to face the Father because he is in Christ and this by grace. This is the believer’s access into⁴⁶ grace. Some commentators do not take the noun *th\̄n prosagw\̄hn* to refer to access but introduction.⁴⁷ These interpreters struggle with the believer having access to God, seeing such an access as emphasizing the believer’s role over Christ’s. Yet Paul is clear that the access is through Christ, and the believer’s boast is that he can approach God in Christ. When the believer approaches God no hostility exists, but peace. Such a boast is acceptable, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). The believer does not boast because of any merit on his part, but because he is righteous in Christ.

Yet the believer does not boast only in this access but also in the adversity he faces, for adversity faced properly results in approval, which in turn results in more hope. This is part of the reason God has chosen for believers to live this life here. By facing adversity, believers grow and are able to demonstrate something about God’s reputation as it is seen in their lives.

In Romans 5:10-11 Paul added reconciliation to his point about peace. The verb reconcile [*katalla;ssw*] meant to affect a change. It was used in the New Testament times of the act of making peace or a basis of peace by means of a change. A cognate of this word is used in

43 “We have peace” involves a textual problem regarding the verb *εχω* [have], whether it is indicative [*εχομεν*] or subjunctive [*εχωμεν*]. The former appears to fit the context best and is supported by the earliest known copy of Romans [0220 (a third century ms)] and a first corrector of Aleph and second corrector of B [Vaticanus]. The subjunctive has support of a few fourth and fifth century manuscripts: *ς*, A, B, C, D. The alternative would be translated, “let us have” or “we may/should have.” The manuscript evidence can be viewed as balanced. See the NET Bible’s note 2 for Romans 5:1. The indicative fits better.

44 Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) p. 364.

45 In the first addition of this paper, I went with the traditional “into” but feel it is more accurate to see this as a causal *εις*. For more on the causal *εις* see H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1955) p. 104. See also Dale R. Spurbeck, *The Causal Use of εις* a paper presented at the 1997 Theological Forum on Contemporary Issues, Dispensational Theological Seminary, Gaston, OR.

46 The *εις* preposition could be causative in this case, “because of grace” with the focus of the access being God as in other texts.

47 Leon Morris does not take *την προσαγωγην* to mean access but “introduction.” He quotes Sanaday and Headlam, “The idea is that of introduction to the presence-chamber of a monarch. The rendering ‘access’ is inadequate, as it leaves out of sight the fact that we do not come in our own strength but need an ‘introducer’-Christ.” Morris op cit. p. 219.

Ephesians 2:15-16, where Jews and Gentiles are made one new man and Christ removed the Law which divided men. Reconciliation is applied to the believer in Christ, with the result of peace. Christ is now our peace (Ephesians 2:14).

Paul anticipated an objection to this hope. Christendom is rife with assertions of uncertainty regarding our future. The Reformer asserts that there is no eternal security, only assurance for the believer who's life meets the righteous standards of Scripture.⁴⁸ The Arminian warns that if the believer does not continue to obey, he may lose his salvation.⁴⁹ Both positions were present when Paul wrote and laid emphasis on the believer's performance. Both positions warn of a false sense of security based on some experiences in one's supposed "christian life." Yet Paul assured the Romans that the hope produced does not leave one ashamed, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through means of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). God's love in this context is not His love worked out through the believer's life. God's love is the presence of the Holy Spirit and His work within the believer. Paul used the same word for "pour out" in Titus 3:6.⁵⁰ The Spirit's presence is the believer's security and hope with reference to God. Stability rests on this.

Through one man the sin nature entered the world

The opening verses of Romans five are concluded in Romans eight. Romans 5:12 through 8:14 address the issue of the sin nature. The sin nature entered the world through Adam. In this section, Paul did not use the noun sin for a series of acts but the sinful nature. William Pettingill wrote on this passage, "Before he had begotten a single child, Adam fell into sin, and, as a result, his nature became sinful and corrupt and death-dealing. And his offspring, which of course includes the whole human family, has inherited from him the poison of his **fallen nature** and the seeds of death."⁵¹ Throughout the next chapters the noun with the article *hJ aJmarti+a* refers to the sin nature, the "indwelling in me sin" (Romans 7:20). "Every time the word "sin" is used in this chapter as a noun, it refers to the evil nature in the Christian."⁵² In the four previous chapters *aJmarti+a* was used four times and only once with the article in which case it was plural referring to many acts of sin. Here Paul saw that spiritual death was the result of the sin nature, and all men possess a sin nature, therefore, all are spiritually dead and will die physically.

48 Wayne Grudem asks three questions regarding genuine assurance under the larger heading *Perseverance of the Saints*. He asks, "Do I Have a Present Trust in Christ for Salvation?", "Is There Evidence of a Regenerating Work of the Holy Spirit in My Heart?", "Do I See a Long-Term Pattern of Growth in My Christian Life?" He then concludes with the warning, "In some evangelical churches, instead of teaching the full and balanced presentation of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, pastors have sometimes taught a watered-down version, which in effect tells people that all who have once made a profession of faith and been baptized are "eternally secure." *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) pp. 803-804.

49 "If a justified person willfully refuses light on holiness, and deliberately refuses to seek entire sanctification when he knows God wants him to, he would lose his justification by disobedience to God-and would go into perdition if he were to die in that state." J. Kenneth Grider *Entire Sanctification* (Kansas City: Beacon Press, 1980) p. 146.

50 The form in Romans 5:5 is *ἐκχύνω* which G Abbott-Smith notes is a "Hellenistic form of *ἐκχέω* the verb in Titus 3:6. op cit.

51 William Pettingill, *The Gospel of God: Simple Studies in Romans* (Findlay, OH: Fundamental Truth Publishers, nd) p. 59.

52 Wuest, op cit, p. 91.

It is not within the scope of this paper to explain in detail chapters five through eight, but a brief sketch will be helpful. Paul first explained that the sin nature and death originated with Adam (5:12-21). Adam's trespass brought condemnation (5:18). Christ dealt with Adam's trespass as well as ours (5:18). Christ's act has made it possible for grace to reign through righteousness in light of (causal eiß) eternal life (5:21). Paul concluded that where the sin nature increased in activity, grace increased even more (uJpereperi+sseusen, 5:20) In chapter six Paul drew the application of Christ's act to the believer's relationship to his sin nature (6:1-13). God logically counts or credits him to be in Christ, and the believer is to do the same. He is to count himself dead to the sin nature and living to God (v. 11). Then in the remainder of chapter six and through chapter seven, Paul focused on how the believer's relationship to the Law affects his relationship to his sin nature. God has released the believer from law so he may obey God (6:14-23). He released the believer from the law by placing him in Christ (7:1-6). Paul drew on his own past experience as a believer to demonstrate that the believer can not experience freedom from the sin nature by using the Law (7:7-25). Rather he needs to focus on his standing in Christ. In Christ, the sin nature does not bring condemnation on the believer (8:1). This is contrasted to the condemnation of all men due to Adam's trespass (Romans 5:18). Additionally, the Holy Spirit apart from the Law affects freedom from the sin nature (8:2-5). The Spirit does this by directing the believer to frame⁵³ his mind with specific truths in Christ. Paul called this walking. Paul encouraged the Roman saints that this struggle was not permanent. God has promised the believer that he will be changed (8:15-30).

The Holy Spirit is the person who is working to conform the believer to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29). It is the Father who has determined this, but the Spirit affects it. The Spirit is the one who affected the resurrection. Romans 8:11 joins the Father and Spirit in this activity. While the believer awaits the full changing of his body when Christ comes for His Church, he can experience the Spirit's work of giving life to his mortal body (Romans 8:11). Paul meant that the believer experiences the life of resurrection while still in this mortal body. Existing in this present body does not make Christian living impossible.

The Spirit in Romans 8:29 is tied to Romans 1:4. In Romans 1:4 Paul did not refer to the Spirit as Holy, but as "of holiness." For this reason, some commentators have interpreted this to refer to Christ's personal human spirit as opposed to the divine Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ By describing the Spirit in this way, Paul connected this to his statement about the Spirit's work of making alive the believer's mortal body. Additionally, the Spirit was involved in boundaries being set within which Christ was dealt with as the Son, and conformity to the image of the Son involves boundaries which were set out previously for the believer. The same Spirit involved in the Son's earthly ministry, is now ministering in the life of the grace believer.

53 This word was used of a fence. It can be illustrated as using certain truths to form a fence which keeps some things out and other things in.

54 So Wuest, pp. 15-16, Phillips pp. 14, Vine, p. 327, Lightfoot, p. 245, Denney, p. 586. Among those who understand this as the Holy Spirit are F.F. Bruce p. 73, Morris, p. 46, Corely & Vaughn, p. 18, Newell, p. 6, Witmer, p. 440. Newell has a note that he has never seen a convincing explanation of what Paul meant by this whole phrase of which "the Spirit of holiness" is a part (p. 6 fn).

Some believers lack stability because of their experience with their own sin natures. They lack stability because they do not understand how they can desire good things but produce evil things they don't desire. They lack stability because, like Paul, they sometimes or often times feel like a wretched man and may even worry about being condemned. They groan in this present body, sometimes to such an extent that they do not know how to worship. This experience alone, apart from solid teaching regarding God's plan for the believer, leads to instability.

Let's summarize Romans 5-8. All men died with Adam for all have a sin nature. All believers have a provision for living in newness of life rather than in their sin nature. All are released from the Law, and none will find freedom from the sin nature in the Law. The Holy Spirit gives the believer freedom in real time as the believer's mind is fenced in with the truths of who he is in Christ. The believer must also remember that this is temporary and one day he will be changed and freed from this struggle. This is true of every believer as a part of the all. Therefore, part one of Romans proves the equal guilt of all believers. All enter salvation on the same plain. Part two proves that all believers have a sin nature, and the presence of the law (if one is Jew) doesn't help. All believers can experience freedom from it, and will be fully freed when Christ appears for His own. The presence of the sin nature does not alter one's access to God and the peace one has before God. Understanding the sin nature is required for one to be stable.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

In the last verses of Romans eight Paul resumed what he began in Romans 5. The believer will not be ashamed because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Paul asserted that nothing can separate the believer from that love. Love always involves activity, it is never just a good feeling. God's activity toward the believer in this context is His logical counting of the believer to be in Christ. The believer's position assures him that he is not condemned, but also that he can walk by the Spirit and live free of the sin nature. Nothing can cause God to stop this logical activity. As a result, the perfect tense of "have had" in Romans 5:2 is fitting; the believer has been given access and still has access. It can not be cut off from the believer. For the believer to be cut off from God's love would mean that God would have to cease seeing or logically counting the believer to be at His right hand in Christ. The concluding point of Romans 5-8 is that despite the struggle with the sin nature, whenever the believer approaches God in his position through Christ, he still has peace! This is true for all believers, non excepted. Grasping the inseparable love of God is vital. The believer's stability rest upon it.

Twice towards the end of Romans eight, Paul asserted that the believer can not be separated from God's love. First in 8:35 it is the love of the Christ,⁵⁵ a reference in this context to the whole body in union with its head Jesus Christ (cf 1 Corinthians 12:12). 8:39 states this is

55 This is an objective Genitive, while in 8:39 the Genitive is the subject of the love.

God's love, the former is God's love directed at the whole Christ, not Christ's love for us.⁵⁶ Despite Paul's assurance that nothing could separate the believer from God's love, some may raise reasoned objections. Anyone familiar with Old Testament Jewish History could suggest that Israel was once the object of God's favor and love but are now cast aside. "What about Israel?" they may ask. If God could cast them away, He could perhaps do that to the present group of believers. Could we be separated? Is Israel a precedent?

Israel: the Word of God has not failed

Leaving Romans eight, we might think we could move directly to chapter twelve and miss nothing. F.F. Bruce put it, "We should have been conscious of no hiatus in his reasoning."⁵⁷ He then commented on the modern reader viewing these chapters as a parenthesis. Indeed, William R. Newell explained, "IN ROMANS NINE, Ten, and Eleven, Paul turns aside from that glorious exposition of Grace, in the first eight chapters, to the explanation of God's present dealing with Israel."⁵⁸ Newell then went on to explain that these chapters serve to allow Paul to speak God's message to all nations. Leon Morris appears to see the connection. He wrote, "Paul's whole argument demands an examination of the Jewish question. Chapter 8 ends on a note of assurance. Those saved in the way of which Paul is writing have been foreknown and predestined by God, and they are assured that this brings them to glory and that nothing can separate them from the love of God. Then what about the Jews? Did not the same God give the same assurance to the Jews as His "elect"?"⁵⁹ Newell appears to get this by asking the question, "Where, then, is the Divine faithfulness?"⁶⁰

Chapters nine through eleven demonstrate God's present work with Israel. First, Paul demonstrated that just because one was a physical descendant of Abraham, that did not constitute him an Israelite spiritually (9:6-8). It is the context of God's work with Israel in which Paul discussed God's act of choosing (election). "So it is not the one wishing or running, but God showing mercy" (9:16). While Israel may have willed to stray after other gods, those who did not, did so because of God's purpose and work.

In verse 20, we again have an "O man" whom Paul addressed. This man is finding fault with God, claiming that since no one resists God's will, God shouldn't find fault in man (9:19). We remind ourselves of chapters one through three, that God allowed man to do what man desired, and it was not to recognize or honor God. Therefore, God has borne, withholding His temper (longsuffering) with those fitted for destruction, to make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy (9:22-23). Those vessels of mercy are both Jews and Gentiles. God kept for Israel a seed (9:29). Most of the nation stumbled over the stumbling

⁵⁶ The title Christ occurs 65 times in Romans. Of these, only eight have the definite article, and of these, only two appear to refer to Christ the individual 9:5 of Israel's Messiah and 15:3. 8:15; 9:3; 14:18; 15:7, 19; 16:16 refer to the Christ, which Paul described as the one new man, the united body of Christ in Christ seen in union with Jesus Christ its head. The remaining 57 occurrences with articles refer to Jesus Christ.

⁵⁷ Bruce, op cit. p. 181.

⁵⁸ Newell, op cit. p. 352.

⁵⁹ Morris, op cit. p. 344.

⁶⁰ Newell, op cit. p. 352.

stone of Christ (9:32). The remnant exists because God chose that remnant and kept them. Therefore, the case of Israel doesn't disprove the certainty of God's love, but proves it. Had God left them to their own choices, they would have been like Sodom and Gommorrah-nothing left! Paul concluded that the gifts and calling of God are not altered, God has not changed. Therefore, "O man" Israel is not cast away, and nothing can separate us from God's love.

In chapter ten Paul addressed Israel's failure within God's plan. His explanation is also a good lesson for the believer. Paul agreed that his Jewish kinsman were zealous but not according to knowledge (e'pi-gnwsis; 10:2). They didn't know in/by experience God's righteousness and therefore, attempted to establish their own (v. 3). As a result, they did not submit to God's righteousness. This functions as an illustrative admonition. Israel failed because they went about to establish their own righteousness. Paul made two points in verse four. While it appears that Paul addressed righteousness as part of initial salvation, he looked more directly at the believer. Christ is also the end of the Law for righteousness for the believer. It is as important for the believer as the unbeliever to grasp this point. Stability rests upon it.

Paul played off an Old Testament quotation to illustrate the problem of attempting to establish one's righteousness in Romans 10:5-8. He quoted from Deuteronomy 30:11-14, in which Moses challenged Israel to see that the commandment wasn't hard to know, it wasn't "to difficult for you, or out of reach" (Deuteronomy 30:11). First, the one who does law righteousness will live (future middle indicative) by them (v. 5). In contrast the righteousness from faith does not say or ask one to do what first: God has already done, and second: what only God can do. In keeping with the quotation, this isn't too hard to understand or grasp. Christ already came down in the incarnation, and the Father raised Him out from dead ones. If an unbeliever attempts to prove himself righteous by law works, or a believer attempts to live righteously by law, it is equivalent to one attempting to repeat the incarnation and resurrection themselves, unnecessary and impossible. Rather, the unbeliever is asked only to agree⁶¹ that Jesus (the man) is Lord (deity, Jehovah of the Old Testament) and believe that God has raised Him. What one believes about Jesus in verses 9-10 corresponds to what one is not to say. One can't do, what God has done, one can only agree and believe.

The issue of the olive tree, and grafted branches in Romans eleven has given rise to many errors regarding the nature of Israel and the church. Yet Paul's point was not about salvation but that God has maintained a remnant among Israel. Paul himself, being a Jew, was part of the remnant, and proof that God has not cast away His people. Due to Israel's persistent unbelief, most of the nation had been broken out of the olive tree, a metaphor for the location of God's work. God had grafted in Gentiles and was not focusing primarily on Jews. Being in the olive tree is not synonymous with salvation. If that were the case, what are we to make of the warning, "for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you" (11:21)? Rather, Gentiles are warned that they will not always be the focus of God's work. The Gentile is warned against arrogance against Jews. Because this change of focus in God's work was not

61 Confession is the verbal agreement with the claim that Jesus is God.

revealed, Paul called this truth a mystery (v. 25). If the believer is ignorant of this mystery, he may tend to frame his mind around himself, as though he were the focus of everything. The believer needs to keep in mind that God's plan is larger than just him. Failing to do so can lead to arrogance against Israelis and the thought that God is done with Israel. If God is done with Israel, then if we mess up bad enough, like them, perhaps He will cast us aside and be done with us. Yet Paul is clear that God has not cast away His people. The security of Israel in God's plan contributes to the stability of the believer.

I encourage you by the tender mercies of God

Chapters twelve through fifteen can be summarized in Romans 12:1-2. Having concluded his thoughts on Israel's failure and God's purpose, Paul encouraged the Romans not to act like those Jews. They were conformed to the age by attempting to establish their own righteousness. Rather, the Roman believers are encouraged to present their bodies and be transformed. They have been saved in their spirit (cf John 3:6; Ephesians 4:17-18) which has renewed their mind. With their renewed mind, they are to be transformed. The Holy Spirit works through the mind to manifest life in our mortal bodies (cf Romans 8:11). Conformation comes from outside influence, while transformation comes from within. The word "transform" is the same word used of Jesus' transfiguration in the gospels (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2). When Jesus was transfigured, He was seen outwardly, what He was inwardly. Likewise, Paul encouraged the Roman saints not to allow the pressure of law in the age outside to conform them, but rather to allow their salvation worked by the Holy Spirit to change them from the inside out. Conformation does not lend to stability, but transformation does.

In the following verses, Paul demonstrated what a presented transformed believers looks like. He doesn't frame his mind around himself (i.e. sees everything as revolving around him), but is to frame his mind⁶² around the body of Christ (12:3-5). He is also to frame his mind towards the body so that he used his supernaturally provided gift (12:6-8). Paul elaborated on this in verses nine through thirteen with a series of verbless clauses, all of which demonstrate an unhypocritical love. The believer can have a proper response to adversity and evil, whether it comes from believers or unbelievers (12:14-21). The believer can have a proper attitude toward governmental laws and those who enforce them, including paying his taxes (13:1-10). He can obey secular law out of love for his fellow believers. The last five verses of Romans 13 remind the believer that now is the time to be transformed. The believer is surrounded by a dark fallen world, and his life should express his salvation. All this is God's will for the saint, and contributes to stability.

Receive the weak in the faith

It is when we reach chapter 14 that we see one of the areas where instability was affecting the Roman saints. The problem was introducing or receiving new believers into the assembly, and then entering into debates over certain activities (14:1). Paul mentioned three areas of doubt or question regarding one's conduct: whether to keep a day, whether to eat meat or vegetables, whether to drink or abstain. These three were an issue between the strong

⁶² Paul used two infinitives, the first "frame you mind" (φρονέω/φρονεῖν) and the second "frame your mind with salvation" or "frame it prudently" (σωφρονέω/σωφρονεῖν).

and the weak believers. The strong knew every day is the same (there is no specified sabbath),⁶³ any meat is acceptable to eat, wine was OK (in moderation). The weak questioned each. The strong looked down on the weak for struggling with these issues, while the weak judged the strong.

Paul encouraged both parties to cease their attitude toward the others. To the weak, he pointed out that a man stands or falls to his own master, implied, “Not to you” (14:4). Paul immediately added, “And He will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” “Be made to stand” is a future passive verb. Future means it will happen. Passive indicates that he does not cause himself to stand, for that is the Lord’s job. This agrees with the Paul’s goal of stability.

The believer can contribute to God’s work of stabilizing believers. He does not welcome such struggling, unstable believers and then debate with them over such issues. He frames his mind with those truths in which the Spirit leads him, i.e. who they are in Christ (cf Romans 8:4-6). The result is “righteousness, peace, and joy by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). Therefore, the believers are to pursue the things pertaining to peace and the things pertaining to the edification of other believers (Romans 14:19). The strong believers bears the responsibility to bear the weaknesses of those who are not strong (Romans 15:1). Like Christ, the strong can forego pleasing himself (Romans 15:2-3). In this way, the believer can be a positive part in God’s work of stabilizing believers.

It should be noted that a significant textual problem exists at the end of Romans 14. It involves the placement of 16:25-27. These verses, considered a closing doxology, occur in some manuscripts at the end of Romans 14, in one manuscript at the end of Romans 15, and some at the end of Romans 16 and in several at the end of both Romans 14 and 16.⁶⁴ The evidence favors in some form the inclusion of these verses at the end of Romans 14. It is hard to conclude why anyone would have moved the verses from the end of the book to this location. Some have gone as far as arguing that Paul wrote to versions of Romans, one a short edition which ended with Romans fourteen and a longer edition as we have the book. It is likely that due the doxological nature of Romans 16:25-27, a copyist moved the verses from the end of Romans 14 to the end of the letter, thinking this was to be Paul’s ending. However, the words are not Paul’s closing but Paul’s recognition that the ultimate stability of believers would be accomplished by God, and not by any human efforts. These verses fit well at the end of Romans 14.

Now to Him who is able

63 William R. Newell devotes a paragraph to the error that Sunday has become the Christian sabbath. He quoted Scofield, “The so-called Puritan teaching here has been rightly called ‘an adulterous theology’; because it sought to marry believers to both husbands, to the Law and to Christ.” op cit. pp. 504-505.

64 ⋈ B C D 048 81 436 630 1739 1962 2127 have 16:25-27 only at the end of Romans 16. L Ψ 0209 181 326 330 451 614 1175 1241 1877 1881 1984 1985 2492 2496 and the Majority texts have 16:25-27 only at the end of Romans 14. A P 5 33 88 104 460 have 16:25-27 at both locations. These verses are found at the end of Romans 15 in P46. This is from the apparatus under Romans 14:23 of *The Greek New Testament Third Ed.* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1984).

Paul had two goals for coming to Rome. He wished to evangelize for the benefit of the Roman saints, but he also wished to do his part in God's work of stabilizing the believers. The book of Romans contributes to both matters, but especially to the second, stabilization. It is necessary for believers to see that all believers come to salvation from the same lost condition; no one is more or less lost than another. Second, though all were ungodly, all are declared righteous by faith. Third, all have access to God, and despite the struggle with the sin nature, this privilege is always available for the saint who will avail himself of it, for nothing can separate him from God's love to him in Christ. In this regard, God's plans for Israel remain. Israel is no proof that God can or might separate one from His love. Finally, in light of this sure, unmovable position in Christ which is totally the work of God, the believer is encouraged to present himself and be changed, to allow God to work through him in the body, for the body, as a part of the body. In this way, the individual believer can be part of God's work of stabilizing saints, rather than part of the problem. Yet in the end, the stabilization of saints is God's work.

While God stabilizes believers, He does not stabilize them apart from instruction. As we have seen, and Paul explains in Romans 16:25-27, God stabilizes believers in accord with the standard of Paul's gospel, the authoritative announcement of who Jesus Christ is, and unveiling of the mystery of God's present design for the believers to be equal members of the body of Christ. When a believer grasps these truths, the issues which cause instability fall away. Rather than taking on the issues (as is so common in churches), the saints need the gracious benefit which affects their spirit, namely the teaching of Who Christ is for us today, and how God sees the body. On the basis of these, and by no other means, God will stabilize His saints for the Christian life God has set before them.

Addendum on “My Gospel”

“My Gospel” - The Gospel in Romans 16:25-27

In Romans 16:25, Paul refers to a good news or gospel which he calls “my gospel.” This good news is the measuring stick against which God establishes believers. It is the standard for Christian maturity. The context is very important as it helps us understand Paul’s purpose, without which, the intended meaning is unclear.

However, the immediate context is affected by a significant textual problem—where do the verses Romans 16:25-27 belong? Different Greek manuscripts place these verses at one of three locations: the common location of Romans 16:25-27, after 14:23, or after 15:33. and one text places it after 14:23 and after 15:33. Thirteen Greek manuscripts support the inclusion of these verses at the end of Romans 16. Six manuscripts have these verses at both the end of chapters 16 and 14. One manuscript places it at the end of both chapters 14 and 15. More than a dozen texts include these words only at the end of chapter 14. In addition to these twelve manuscripts the 1,175 manuscripts comprising the Byzantine or Majority text type support its inclusion only at the end of chapter 14. One manuscript omits the the verses at any location but leaves six lines empty at the end of chapter 14. Metzger comments, “This suggests that the scribe of G had reason to think that after 14.23 was the place where the doxology should occur, but that it was lacking in the manuscript from which he was copying.”⁶⁵ Metzger in his *Textual Commentary* gives extended treatment to this problem, and is helpful but inconclusive. Leon Morris also gives an extended introductory note to this problem. In it he points out that chapters 15-16 are not quoted by three early bishops: Tertullian who was 2nd and early 3rd century, Irenaeus also 2nd century, and Cyprian who was 3rd century. These men quote extensively from the remainder of Romans, indicating that they may not have had copy containing the last two chapters.⁶⁶ Morris suggests that Marcion (a false-believer), who severely edited the Bible to reflect his anti-Jewish sentiments, may have excised chapters 15-16 because of some Jewish statements.⁶⁷ However, had Marcion edited these chapters from his text, it seems he would also have edited out chapters 9-11, as they point to God’s continuing purpose and work with Israel. It is likely that some copyists did not include chapter 16 feeling that the extended greetings to members of the Roman church were unnecessary for individuals in the region for whom they were making a copy. For example, if a copyist made a copy for a church in Egypt, he might have felt that the greetings to individual in Rome were

⁶⁵ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (NY: United Bible Societies, 1971) p. 535.

⁶⁶ Morris, op cit. pp. 21-24.

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 24. For more on Marcion, his teaching and Bible, see F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, (Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1988). pp 134-144.

unnecessary for those in Egypt, and therefore omitted that section from the many corpus of the letter. Surely, this is an involved textual matter, but I will suggest one solution.⁶⁸

The great diversity of manuscripts regarding the placement of these verses evidences an issue that may help us understand part of Paul's purpose in writing this letter. Philip Comfort notes on this verse the decision of location is more a literary critical decision than one for the textual scholar.⁶⁹ Comfort notes that the evidence is broad and inconclusive. Granted, no matter where these verses are placed, they all agree as to what is said. We have this revelation, it is available to us regardless of location. However, location provides immediate context. All Scripture provides a context. Each book narrows the context further, and so on within each book, each section, paragraph, sentence, and phrase. Therefore, the location or context of these verses may help us understand their intent.

Part of the problem is that interpreters rightly designate these verses a doxology. A doxology is a statement of worship to God, often but not always concluding with an "amen."⁷⁰ Some feel that a doxology is a fitting closing to a letter, and therefore, this should be located at the end of chapter 16. Without this doxology, Romans ends abruptly, "Erastus, city manager and Couartos the brother greet you." Such an ending is unlike Paul, and interpreters are right to question the validity of such an ending. However, some texts repeat the ending of verse 20 as a verse 24, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with all of you, amen." If verse 24 does not exist, we do find an ending in verse 20, after which Paul affixed four more greetings in verses 21 through 23. This means that the doxology of 25-27 does not need to be at the end of Romans to agree with Paul's other letters, as at least two other options exist in keeping with other manuscripts. Additionally, Paul often includes doxologies in the middle of his letters. He does not reserve them for his closing. In Romans he has doxologies in 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; and 15:33 in addition to 16:25-27. Other examples of doxologies in the middle of Paul's letters are Galatians

⁶⁸ The thirteen Greek manuscripts including these verses at the end of Romans 16 are \mathfrak{p}^{61} , \mathfrak{s} B C D 81 365 436 630 1739 1962 2127 2464.⁶⁵ Of these manuscripts \mathfrak{p}^{61} is from about AD 700, \mathfrak{s} and B are 4th century, C and D are 5th, 81 is AD 1085, 536 and 1739 are 10th, 1962 and 2464 are 11th, and 2127 are c. 12th, 365 is 13th, 630 is 14th century.⁶⁶ Of these manuscripts, Kurt and Barbara Aland of the Deutsche Biblegesellschaft (German Bible Society) place \mathfrak{s} and B in category I, "Manuscripts of a very special quality which should always be considered in establishing the original text."⁶⁷ The six manuscripts locating these verses at the end of chapters 16 and 14: A P 5 33 (88) 104. Textual scholars have dated these manuscripts as follows: A is 5th century, P is 9th, 5 is 14th, 33 is 9th, 88 is 12th, 104 is dated the year 1087. The texts locating these words only at the end of chapter 14, L ψ 0209 181 326 330 451 460 614 1241 1877 1881 1984 1985 2492 2495. L is 9th century, ψ is 8/9th, 0209 is 7th, 181 is eleventh with revisions in the 15th, 326, 330, 1241 are 12th, 451 is 11th, 614 is 13th, 2492 is 13th, 1877 and 1881 is 14th, 2492 is 15th. The Byzantine or Majority text includes 1,175 manuscripts dating from the 9th to 17th centuries and are largely in agreement among themselves. Manuscript \mathfrak{p}^{46} , which dates to about AD 200 (very early among texts), includes these verses at the end of chapter 15 and omits chapter 16 altogether. For listing of these texts see *Novum Testament Graece 27ed*, ed. Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1993). For the dates see Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) pp. 96-142.

⁶⁹ *Early Manuscripts & Modern Translations of the New Testament*, (Wheaton, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990) p. 138.

⁷⁰ The Greek $\alpha\mu\eta\upsilon$ represents the Hebrew אמן , both meaning "true." Writers placed after statements about God which were true. Copyists often added "amen" to the ends of the NT books as a fitting statement of the truthfulness of the book. However, these should be distinguished from the amens originally penned by the NT authors.

1:5; Ephesians 3:21; 1 Timothy 1:17 and Hebrews 13:21. We have precedence for Paul to include a doxology in the middle of a letter, not just at the end.

While many textual problems can be understood as accidental copyists' errors: mistaking one word for another, skipping over a second word which is similar to the word prior, the present problem of moving these verses from the end of the book to the end of Romans 15 or Romans 14 is much harder to explain. Some have tried to explain both alternate endings, that Paul ended the letter and then returned to it later adding more, therefore the ending had to be moved or was repeated. It is also possible that Paul was not ending the letter at either of the other locations, but that a copyist thought this was supposed to be Paul's ending. This copyist may have moved it to the end of the letter rather than leaving it in its original location.

Of the manuscript evidence, one set is interesting because it locates these verses between chapters 14 and 15 and does not omit chapters 15 and 16. In this case, the doxology has something to do with Paul's theme in chapters 14 and 15. 14:1 begins a section which continues through to 15:13 or perhaps even to 15:14.⁷¹ We'll look at this section in more detail later, but for the present I'll summarize this section as dealing with weak believers and practices with which they still deem questionable. Paul's first phrase in the verses in question appears to fit the matter, "Now to the one being able to make you firm" or "establish you." Paul then goes on to the truths by which and in accord with which God accomplishes this establishing. Having concluded this thought, expressed as a doxology (a human designation), Paul continues to explain the appropriate response of strong believers to weak believers. Therefore, the doxology fits between these two chapters, in the middle of Paul's discussion to remind all the believers that God, not they, will do the work of establishing believers. Further, the doxology explains how God accomplishes that. Believers have invented multitudes of methods and techniques for pushing other believers onto growth, but these inevitably fail because they are not God's means. Knowing God's means, as Paul expressed them in 16:25-27, helps us cooperate with what God is doing rather than working against Him or outside His plan.

Bible students refer to Romans 16:25-27 as a doxology because Paul focuses upon God, His character and activity. In 1:25 Paul contrasts the historical anti-God attitude to the fact that God is "the One having created, Who is blessed into the ages, amen." As Paul begins his discussion about God's present work with the Jews, He points out God's past work among the Jews and concludes that Jesus Himself is a Jewish descendent. In 9:5 he states, "Christ ... the One being God over all things, blessed into the ages." Paul concludes his lengthy discussion about God's present work with the Jews in 11:36, "Because from Him and through Him and for Him *are* the all things, To Him *is* the glory into the ages, amen." 15:33 ties off a section which began in 14:1 (possibly even 12:1) regarding the relationships of believers to one another. They needed to pursue peace with one another, and therefore, Paul concludes, "Now the God of

⁷¹ Verse 14 appears to me to be part of the preceding section though many Bible students end the section at verse 13.

peace is with you all, amen.” Each of these “amen” sections or doxologies focus on some aspect of God’s character which Paul tied to the issue in each immediate context.

The immediate context of Romans 16:25-27 is, as we have seen, in doubt. At the least, it falls within the context of Romans and the letter’s larger issue, which we briefly noted involves the stability of the Romans saints. However, if these verses occur between Romans 14 and 15 the context is clearer. If it is located between these two chapters, the point of the letter is more pronounced. The matter of weak and strong believers calls for an assurance of God’s work in the life of believers. It helps to remind saints that God is able to stabilize those who struggle with practices which they consider questionable, or perhaps even wrong. Knowing that God can do this leads Paul to state, “But we the strong are obliged to bear the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1).

Paul’s first point is that God accomplishes stability (Romans 16:25). Believers do not stabilize themselves. Christ also stabilizes believers (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:3; 1 Peter 5:10). We also learn that other believers can serve a role in stabilizing fellow believers (1 Thessalonians 3:2). Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians to establish and encourage them on behalf of their faith. Paul had left Thessalonica prematurely and sent Timothy back to provide further instruction which was necessary for their stability. Likewise, Peter’s readers were stable by the present truth (2 Peter 1:12).

Therefore, believers need instruction for stability. Believers also need to appropriate that instruction to their individual situations and this is James’ point in James 5:8. As he drew his letter to a close, he encouraged his readers to establish their hearts by doing what he had written and focusing upon their Lord’s near coming. James could write about a proper attitude regarding wealth, position and the world but he could not make others put it into practice.⁷² They needed to appropriate these truths for themselves. By appropriating proper truths believers can be stabilized.

The first truth tied to firm believers is “my gospel” (Romans 16:25). God establishes believers according to this gospel. “According to” [κατα] indicates the measure or standard by which God does this work. “My gospel” is the standard for this work. God does not deviate from the standard He has established.

Gospel is a tricky issue because most Bible students simply truth, even when God does not intend for it to be simplified. Most Bible students assume that the word gospel always refers to the message we announced to the unsaved. That gospel tells them about Jesus Christ, that He is God in flesh who died on the cross for our sins, was buried, was raised the third day, and was seen of many (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). That gospel holds God’s promise that if they believe it, He will declare them righteous and forgive their sins (Acts 10:43; 13:38-39). That

⁷² This is the main issue of James. He was writing to scattered Jewish Christians who had lost homes, jobs, possessions, and were not trying to reclaiming their lost lifestyle. In doing so, they were showing favoritism to the rich, and despising the poor. They were not meeting the real needs of fellow believers. They were greedy for things of this world, and setting out to enter business without ever determining if it were God’s will.

gospel is a powerful message, in fact it is God's power to salvation for all who believe (Romans 1:16). The word gospel or good news does not always refer to this specific message. The Bible speaks of others messages which are also good news.

God has messages for believers, for those who are already saved, which He calls gospels. The gospel for the unsaved is still a good news as far as believers are concerned, but God has more to say to those of us who are believers. We can demonstrate in Scripture that God announced gospels to believers that Jews and Gentiles are full equals in the body of Christ, that believers have a rest at the throne of grace, that God is a happy God. These are samples of truths which Paul designated gospels.

Why does Paul call it "my gospel?" Was it no one else's? If we compare Peter's message in Acts 10 to the household of Cornelius with Paul's message in Lystra recorded in Acts 13, we find no substantive difference. Both provide a brief history regarding the person of Jesus Christ. Both refer to His good works, His rejection and death, and both emphasize His resurrection. Peter did not receive that message from Paul, as it was comparable to His message emphasizing the rejection, death and resurrection of Christ in Acts 2. Therefore, strictly speaking, if Paul's gospel is that which we speak to unbelievers promising them salvation if they believe, it does not appear to be specially Paul's.

One explanation of the expression "my gospel" understands Paul as personalizing the message. Leon Morris writes from this opinion, "Paul speaks here of *my* gospel (as in 16:25). He has appropriated it and made it his own. He does not mean that he thought it up or that it belongs to him in any special way or that there is some peculiarity in the way he sets it forth. He means that he knows it really and not theoretically."⁷³ Harrison and Hagner bring a slightly different meaning to this expression. "Doubtless the possessive pronoun points up the fact that in Paul's case it came by direct revelation (Ro 1:1; cf. Gal 1:12), though confirmed as to its actual historical content by leaders of the Jerusalem church (1Co 15:1-11)."⁷⁴ John Philip's and H.C.G. Moule both see in Paul's words, "[T]he gospel proclaimed by others, but it did show a much fuller and wider development."⁷⁵ These opinions are repeated variously by others, showing that the predominant interpretation of "my gospel" sees no difference between what Paul taught and what others were teaching. This again is due to seeing "gospel" as referring to the message of salvation preached to the lost.

Paul used similar terminology in Galatians referring to a gospel given to him which he contrasted to what others were doing. He wrote the Galatian believers because false teachers had announced a different gospel (Galatians 1:6). In doing so, they were perverting the gospel

⁷³ Morris, op cit. p. 129.

⁷⁴ Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner *Romans* in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol 11, Rev. eds.* Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) p. 235.

⁷⁵ Phillips, op cit, p. 283. In a footnote on Romans 2:16, Moule elaborated, "Here, perhaps, for once, the word **εὐαγγέλιον** is used in an extended and "improper" sense, to denote the whole message *connected with* the Glad Tidings, and so now the warning of judgment to come, which gives to the Glad Tidings its sacred urgency." H.C.G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (FortWashington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975) p. 65, fn*

about Christ (Galatians 1:7). Paul even asserted that an angel might announce a different good news (Galatians 1:8). Paul was concerned because at least some of the Galatian believers were moving away from the one who called them and going to this different gospel (Galatians 1:6). How could true believers depart from the gospel, presuming it is the gospel for initial salvation? It is more consistent that gospel at issue is a gospel for believers, not for unbelievers.

Accursed-Anathema

Paul stated that any who would promote this different message would be “set aside” (Galatians 1:8-10). The word “accursed” translates the Greek **αναθεμα** [*anathema*]. Most Bible students presume that this word meant “damned to hell.” The 1984 version of the New International Version translated it, “let him be eternally condemned.” Thomas Schreiner states, “The term refers here to final destruction and condemnation.”⁷⁶ However, Paul used this term in Romans 9:3 to express his wish to be **accursed** from the Christ, evidently so that his fellow Jews might be saved. Paul was not wishing to be eternally condemned or destroyed in the lake of fire so that his fellow Jews could be saved, for then he would become, in some sense, their savior. Rather, Paul was willing to be benched or set aside from the benefits of being Christ so that Jews could be saved. In fact, Paul told the Corinthians that he did this. Though he was free of all, he made himself a slave of all to win some. He became a Jew to the Jews, and to those who were under the law, he became like one who was under the law, though, because he was in Christ, he was not under law (1 Corinthians 9:19-21). Though Leon Morris did not agree with my present conclusion, the first part of his footnote on this word is helpful. He stated regarding *anathema*, “From the idea of “laid up” (i.e., in the a temple) **αναθεμα** came to mean what is devoted to deity, and then either consecrated or, since what is thus given to deity is permanently lost to the giver and may be completely destroyed,...”⁷⁷ Thayer similarly stated, “a thing set up or laid by in order to be kept; spec. a votive offering, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of his temple, or put in some other conspicuous place ... 2. **‘ανα’θεμα** in the Sept. is generally the translation of the Heb. **חֶרֶם**, a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, and, if an animal to be slain ... therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction.”⁷⁸ Note that in the first part of Thayer’s definition we have room for a broader definition than many hold. The word allows for an interpretation which does not mean “cursed to hell.” Paul employed the word again regarding believers who do not love the Lord (cf. Romans 8:28). If a believer is loving the world, the love for the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15). John used a present imperative “stop loving” indicating that some of the believers were loving the world. James 1:12 states that believers who endure temptation rather than succumb are loving the Lord. Therefore, the one who succumbs is not loving the Lord. Therefore, when Paul told the Corinthians that anyone

⁷⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) p. 87.

⁷⁷ Morris, op cit, p. 347, fn 15.

⁷⁸ J.H. Thayer, *New Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers & Authors, 1979) p. 37. The Hebrew *cherem* [חֶרֶם] for which the Greek *anathema* is a translation in the Septuagint [OT translated into Greek] similarly means “TO SHUT UP ... (1) specially to shut in, ... (2) to prohibit to common use to consecrate to God.” William Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) p. 305. Gesenius gives two emphasizes under his second definition: to consecrate or devote and then to extirpate or destroy utterly. The Old Testament word meant destroy or devote to destruction only by context.

who is not fond [φιλεω] of the Lord, he concluded, “Let him be set aside” (1 Corinthians 16:22). Such a believer maybe busy, but for practical purposes, he is sitting on the bench while the game goes on. He used the word again to state that no one who speaks by the Spirit, ever states that Jesus is set aside (1 Corinthians 12:3). Finally, in one non-Pauline text, Luke tells us that a group of anti-Christian Jews put themselves under “an oath” (Acts 23:14). This is the same word, and demonstrates that they were not intending to condemn themselves to hell for eternity, but set themselves aside from the normal activities of daily life, especially eating food, and they intended to remain set aside until they killed Paul. Therefore, Paul meant something different than “condemned to hell” regarding this different gospel. Paul meant that anyone announcing a contrary gospel, including himself, should be “benched” or “set up.”⁷⁹

Those who announced this gospel, which was different from the one Paul announced to them were to be set aside or hung on the wall. He included himself in that, “even if we” (Galatians 1:8). Did Paul think he could deviate from that message? If so, did he believe he could lose his salvation and be consigned to hell? What about angels? How would they play into this distorted message? Perhaps Paul was speaking in hyperbole?⁸⁰ I don’t believe this is hyperbole, but to demonstrate this, we need first to establish precisely about what gospel Paul was writing.

It is interesting that Paul came under this anathema in Acts 21. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he was confronted with a crowd of believing Jews who were zealous of the Law (Acts 20:21). They had heard that Paul was telling the Jews among the Gentiles to depart from Moses (v. 21b). “Now the rumors about Paul were indeed true. He had preached the Gospel as it had been given to him by the risen Christ. In that Gospel the law could not be recognized. He had taught the position of the believer in Christ and as such the believing Jew was free from the law.”⁸¹ Instead of correcting the Jewish believers’ error that they could go on living under law, he authorized it (Acts 21:21, 24). Ryrie cautiously answers the question, “Second, was Paul out of the Lord’s will in this action? God alone knows the full answer to this though it would seem that he may have gone too far in his desire to please men. Certainly he had had sufficient warnings not to go to Jerusalem.”⁸² Paul’s actions were more than an encouragement to continue in moral law, as some interpreters attempt to present this. Paul put up money for men to offer sacrifices (Acts 21:26 “offering”). F.F. Bruce delineated, “The offering consisted of one he-lamb, one ewe-lamb, one ram, and accompanying meal and drink-offerings, according to Num. vi. 14 f.”⁸³ Numbers 6:14 states that the ewe-lamb was a sin offering. Not all Bible students agree with this conclusion, many attempt to excuse Paul’s actions. However, here was Paul, by his actions telling these believers that it was OK to practice the Law. As a result, Paul

⁷⁹ For a brief analysis of this section see Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (NY: Our Hope, 1912)pp. 365-367. This was not an “I become all things to all men, that I might win some” situation. Paul did that to win people to Christ. Paul’s actions in Acts 21 were toward believers who were all zealous of the Law.

⁸⁰ This is Schreiner’s assertion. *ibid.* p. 87.

⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 365.

⁸² Charles C. Ryrie, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1961) p. 111.

⁸³ F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) p. 394.

spent two years in the maritime prison of Caesarea, and did not engage in ministry. He had essentially benched himself for two years.

As an aside, though we may find it hard to watch our beloved apostle deviate from God's expressed will we can take encouragement. Paul came under the very anathema about which he had written. He was benched, but not permanently. Paul began to minister again during his trip to Rome, and then for two years he ministered from a rented house while chained to a Roman soldier. Paul later rejoiced that though chained, Christ had become known to the Roman guards in charge of him (Philippians 1:13). Eventually Paul stood before Caesar, was freed and ministered for a few more years before his final arrest and execution. Therefore, despite the problem, we can take away that as long as we're still here breathing, God has something for us to do. If we spend some time on the bench due to some act of disobedience, our gracious and faithful God can allow us to serve again.

How could angels be involved in this matter? I believe Paul only refers to fallen or unrighteous angels. God's elect or righteous angels would not come and announced contrary truth. However, during New Testament times people were still received new revelation. That revelation was sometimes mediated by spirit beings (i.e. angels). As late as about AD 90-95 John wrote that believers were to "test the spirits if they are from God" (1 John 4:1). He gave one criterion for testing them and that involved what they confessed regarding the person of Jesus Christ; has He come in flesh with the result that He still is in flesh (v. 2)?⁸⁴ God employed angels when He gave the Law (Hebrews 2:2; Acts 7:53). It is not surprising that fallen angels would misdirect believers to focus upon the Mosaic Law rather than God's present revelation for Christian living. Paul warned Timothy that people would depart from the faith and give their attention to spirits that would lead them astray even to doctrines from demons (1 Timothy 4:1). The faith is that body of doctrine which reveals how we are to live the Christian life. The doctrines of demons are not scary teachings. The word "doctrines" translates *didaskaklia* a word emphasizing teaching which is not practiced but is accepted as true. It is contrasted to the *didache* which is teaching intended to be practiced. Paul used it most frequently of Old Testament doctrine, for it expressed real facts but did not govern his or our conduct. The best means of leading believers astray from the faith, is not to teach a blatant lie, but to misappropriate portions of God's Word which are not intended for our practice. Angels did this, and likely presented it as a good news for believers. They should be set aside and ignored. Just as John's readers were not to listen to the spirits who failed the test, so the Galatians were not to give their attention to angels who failed this test, presenting a different gospel.

Paul's Gospel—The Galatian Connection

This brings us to the matter of Paul's gospel; what is it: how is it to be defined? One problem involves Bible interpreters' tendency to generalize. While warned to consider words in their context, larger theological themes are often treated in an homogenous manner. The word gospel is a good example. A survey of commentators on Romans demonstrates the

⁸⁴ John used a perfect tense to emphasize a past action with a continuing result.

thought that “gospel” nearly always refers to the message announced to the unsaved, imploring them to believe. However, the New Testament mentions gospels in several passages which do not fit the idea of initial salvation.⁸⁵ Timothy brought Paul a good news, a gospel about the Thessalonians and it was not the message by which one believes to salvation (1 Thessalonians 3:6). Most would not classify this a gospel, yet it is the same word. Jesus Christ and John the baptizer announced two gospels, one about the kingdom of God and another about the kingdom from the heavens (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15). That this is not our gospel for initial salvation can be seen in Luke 18. Shortly before Christ’s death and resurrection, He told His disciples precisely what would happen to Him (Luke 18:32-33). Yet Luke stated three times that Jesus’ disciples did not understand or know what Jesus meant (v. 34). However, Jesus’ disciples had been sent out and had announced the gospel of the kingdom. How could they proclaim a message and yet have no understanding about that message and even disagree with Jesus about those events (Mark 8:31-33). The message of Jesus and John regarding the kingdom was not the message we proclaim. These are two distinct messages, announced at two distinct times, for two distinct groups.

In his letters to the various churches, Paul spoke of gospels which were not the good news we announce to the unsaved. God announced a good news to Abraham about his future seed (Galatians 3:8). Israel heard a good news about entering the land (Hebrews 4:2-3, 6). Robert Gromacki writes, “A Kadesh, the nation heard the gospel from the twelve spies who were sent by Moses into the land (Num. 13).”⁸⁶ We also now have good news promising us rest from our efforts to approach God (Hebrews 4:2). This is not the gospel for initial salvation, but a gospel for those who are already believers. When facing Satan’s attack believers are to put on as shoes the preparedness with the good news which provides peace between saints in the body (Ephesians 6:15). This is a good news which affects the interaction of believers in peace. Paul had time in Thessalonica to also announce to them the gospel of God, a good news which reveals that the believer is related to God, the whole God-head both by indwelling the believer and by the believer being positioned in the God-head (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2, 8). Three references to a gospel are related, the stabilizing gospel in Romans 16, a mystery gospel for which Paul desired boldness (Ephesians 6:19), and the gospel of the happy God (1 Timothy 1:11). Because several gospels are mentioned, it is necessary to discern by context which message is intended.

Paul’s gospel is related to a mystery. The gospel in Ephesians 6:19 was a mystery. That gospel cannot be the good news announced to unsaved men. The message we announce to the unsaved was no mystery. That message was revealed in prophetic passages such as Psalm 22, 69; and Isaiah 53. The week before His death and resurrection, Christ announced that gospel to His disciples (Luke 18:31-34). Paul announced Christ’s death and resurrection with great

⁸⁵ See L.S. Chafer *Systematic Theology Vol. VII*, (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) pp. 175-177 in which he mentions multiple gospels and cites C.I. Scofield’s explanation of four of these gospels. Ryrie also briefly distinguishes the gospel of the kingdom from the gospel of salvation C.C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997) pp. 35-37.

⁸⁶ R.G. Gromacki, *Stand Bold in Grace*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984) p. 72. To be fair, Gromacki appears to distinguish this good news from that evangelized to the unsaved, but does not appear to distinguish the latter gospel from any others.

boldness, but he asked for boldness to announce the mystery good news in Ephesians 6:19. The mystery gospel reveals that God intends for believers today to live by grace, not by law. That is good news. Paul's gospel and that for the unsaved, are two distinct messages for separate audiences.

Paul's gospel combined several truths to affect the Christian's way of life. It combined the truth that the believer is in Christ, that God makes no distinctions between believers in Christ, that God will finish the work in the believer which He began, that the believer is to live with respect to God's grace (not law), and that God is a happy God. These realities and others should result in a different attitude toward life, and therefore, a different way of life.

Paul pointed out that the gospel he had announced was not measured by any human standard (Galatians 1:11). For this reason, Paul was not trying to please men, but God (1:10). Paul did not receive the message from men (1:12). He was not taught it *from men*, by elipsis (1:12). He received it and was taught it by a revelation from Jesus Christ (1:12). Three times in Acts we have an account of Paul's experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). Only in Acts 26 does Paul give any hint of a revelation regarding a gospel, that is, Paul did see the resurrected Lord, so he stated, "both of the things which you saw" (Acts 26:17). To this the Lord added, "and of the things which I **will** appear to you." The Lord appeared later to Paul. Nothing is related between the Lord and Paul while on the road to Damascus about Christ's sacrificial death. Paul could deduce that the Lord was living, and this certainly was the key facet of the gospel for the lost or unsaved. However, it is in the "things which I will appear to you" that Paul appears to emphasize his ministry. As Luke records in Acts 26, Paul explained to Agrippa that he obeyed and announced to both Jews and Gentiles that they should repent and turn to (lit. upon, i.e. as a basis of confidence) God (v. 20). He also was announcing to both groups that they should be practicing works which were worthy of repentance (v. 20). "Worthy of" meant that works were in balance with or consistent with their repentance. Initial salvation is not based upon our good works past, present or future. However, our growth or present salvation does involve works, but not just any works, but those which are consistent with our salvation. Therefore, this further information regarding a proper way of life must have been communicated when the Lord appeared to Paul at a later time, for He did not communicate it during the road experience.

Paul also said that he was taught this gospel (Galatians 1:12). We do not teach the unsaved the gospel we present it as a good news. In the Greek the word "evangelize" means to announce a gospel or good news. It is a verb form of the word gospel; gospel is *euangelion* and evangelize is *euangelidzo*, the former is a noun, the latter a verb. To evangelize is different from teaching. Paul asserted that he did not immediately consult with other human beings to learn this gospel (Galatians 1:16). Rather he went into Arabia (v. 17). Paul never includes this in his accounts of the Damascus road event which Luke recorded in Acts. Paul indicates that rather than consulting with men, he consulted with the Lord. Reading the Acts accounts we would conclude that Paul traveled to Jerusalem shortly after his salvation. However, in Galatians Paul wrote that three years passed between his salvation and subsequent trip to Jerusalem (v. 18).

The events of Galatians 2 are also recorded in Acts 15. Some attempt to make the Galatians 2 visit the same as in Acts 12.⁸⁷ However, Luke does not record any interaction, discussion or debate surrounding that visit. The issues discussed in Acts 15 and those discussed in Galatians are the same.⁸⁸ Robert Rapa points in favor of the Acts 12 visit, that had Paul been referring to the Acts 15 visit in Galatians 2, he certainly would have referenced their decree.⁸⁹ However, Paul's point in this letter is not to bring the decree to bear on the problem but rather to point out the inconsistency of turning to the Law rather than the Spirit. Yet, Paul does reference the decree to some degree in Galatians 2:6-10. Further, Paul and Barnabas had not yet been sent out by the Spirit (Acts 13:1-2). On this point Lenski points out that the visit in Acts 12 "antedates the founding of the Galatian churches."⁹⁰ The view that Galatians 2 refers to the events in Acts 15 best fits the evidence in both texts.

Paul and Barnabas' preaching among the Gentiles resulted in a conflict which came to head upon their return to Antioch from Galatia (Acts 15:1). It was during the apostolic work which commenced in Acts 13, that Paul began to teach Gentiles how to live by grace. Beginning in Acts 13:14, Luke provides us a detailed account of Paul's evangelistic approach. This approach was directed at Israelis and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (central Turkey). When Paul concluded and the synagogue broke up for the day, many followed Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:43). Paul and Barnabas were speaking to these who followed them. "Speaking" is a verb in the imperfect tense, meaning that this was an ongoing activity at that time. Paul and Barnabas did not share a couple of brief words with these people. It is more likely that during the week between the two sabbaths Paul and Barnabas were teaching these individuals. They persuaded them to "continue in the grace of God" (v. 43). They were not persuading them to keep the Law, but to really continue in God's grace. The verb "continue" [*prosmeno*] derives from the verb *meno* which meant to stay or remain at ease. It always has the idea of someone or something continuing and doing so at ease with the circumstances or intent. *Prosmeno* intensifies this thought, "really continue being at ease in the grace of God." To be at ease means that one is not wrestling with being acceptable, with fitting in, with worthy. God's grace does not take into account our merit or lack of merit. This attitude was distinct from that under law, which necessitated careful observance of the law and in

⁸⁷ So Schreiner, *Galatians*, pp. 120-121. Robert G. Gromacki, *Stand Fast in Liberty*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) p. 49. Alan Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) p. 62, though he is not dogmatic about the issue. Donald K. Campbell, *Galatians* in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, (Wheaton, Victor Books, 1984) p. 593. Robert K. Rapa, *Galatians* in *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) p. 553-554.

⁸⁸ So Lightfoot, *Galatians*, pp. 123-128 in which he sets out quite a case for the Acts 15 visit. Also Wuest, *Galatians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) pp. 56-57. Lightfoot also points out that this was the view of the Church Fathers. Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962) pp. 115-117. Though Burton expresses the opinion that the Acts account may be inaccurate. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. IV*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931) p. 272, 282. Fredrick Rendall *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* in *The Expositor's Greek Testament, vol III*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) pp. 141-144. W.E. Vine also appears to favor the Acts 15 meeting, but is not clear. *The Collected Works of W.E. Vine*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) pp. 152-153.

⁸⁹ Rapa, *Expositor's Bible Commentary, op cit*, pp. 553-554.

⁹⁰ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937) p. 68.

which no one was ever at ease. Therefore, this simple expression indicates Paul teaching a new way of life.

Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to settle the matter of how Gentiles were to live. They made this trip fourteen years of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem following his salvation. Before those in Jerusalem, Paul laid out the gospel which he proclaimed (Galatians 2:2). If this gospel is the message regarding Christ's death for sins and His resurrection, they already knew what Paul was preaching. They had heard it on his first visit, after Barnabas brought him before the apostles (Acts 9:26-30). Luke states that while Paul was moving about with the apostles, he was speaking boldly in the name of the Lord (v. 28). Also note that at the end of Galatians one, just before he brings up the council in chapter two, Paul points out that he was unknown in person or by face to the churches of Judea. They heard he was now evangelizing the faith which he once persecuted, and the people were glorifying God regarding this (Galatians 1:22-24). The issue was not the message for initial salvation. They knew that message. They shared the proclamation of that message.

The message under consideration in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 regards the way of life for believers after believing the gospel. In Galatians 2 Paul has just stated that he received this message from the Lord, not from men. Paul knew the source of his message. Therefore, the matter was not whether the message was accurate, but rather that the Church in Jerusalem would recognize this God-given message and call off those who were attempting to pervert Paul's message. James indicated that those who came to Antioch and insisted on circumcision for Gentiles were from the Jerusalem church, but had not been sent by the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:1, 24). The question involved whether the Gentiles should be troubled, whether they should be required to be circumcised (Acts 15:1, 19).

In the same way that many Bible interpreters generalize regarding the referent of the word "gospel" they also generalize regarding the word save and its cognates. So, in Acts 15:1, when some insisted that without circumcision the Gentiles could not be saved, most interpreters refer this to initial salvation, or the salvation which involves the forgiveness of sins and declaration of righteousness. We must always honor the context when interpreting the word save in its many forms. "Save" refers to physical healing, rescue from physical danger, and spiritual salvation. When "save" refers to spiritual salvation it still demands context, for salvation is past, present and future. So "save" may refer to our past, when we first believed the good news (1 Corinthians 15:2; Titus 3:5). Often save refers to our present (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 7:25; James 2:14). Save also refers to our future, when Christ will appear for us and we will be changed (1 Corinthians 3:15; Romans 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:8, 9). Learning to recognize the time frame to which a text refers is most helpful when reading the word save.

So, in Acts 15:1, the point of contention was not whether Gentiles could be forgiven and justified without circumcision. The point was whether those Gentile could go on in salvation, to grow or mature without being circumcised. Cornelius serves as an example. He was "one who fears God" and held in high regard by the Jews (Acts 10:1-2, 22). F.F. Bruce and Homer

Kent both express the truth that the Jews knew Cornelius to be uncircumcised.⁹¹ For the Jews, circumcision was not necessary to “salvation” but for coming under God’s blessings of the nation of Israel. So also for the Jewish believers, circumcision was not necessary for initial salvation, but that it allowed individuals to go on in salvation. For the average Jew, saved or unsaved, their access to God at the temple was restricted to those who obeyed the Law, and that included circumcision. This was the main issue in Hebrews, that believers have access to God not through priests and an earthly temple but directly through Jesus Christ our high priest. Yet the letter to the Hebrews was written specifically because the Jewish believers didn’t know this, and assumed that observance of the Law and the Jewish way of life was necessary. So the thinking in Acts 15 was that if one remained an uncircumcised Gentile, it would be logical that he was limiting his access to God, and in so doing making it impossible for him to be saved or grow.

So, the issue of the gospel in Galatians is the same issue addressed in Acts 15. In Galatians 2:2, Paul expressed his concern that he was running in vain or had run in vain. “Vain” means empty of content.⁹² The prior verses indicate that Paul knew the source of his gospel—the Lord. Therefore, it is unlikely that Paul had a doubt or question about whether he had the correct message. In fact, Acts 15:2 states that Paul and Barnabas had a real debate with those attempting to impose circumcision on the Gentile converts. Paul and Barnabas debated because Paul knew well what he was to be teaching. So, in Galatians 2:2, Paul’s concern over his work being in vain was not that he might be doing it wrong, but that others would follow him and undo what he had taught by pressing new Gentile believers to live by law. To do so would empty Paul’s good news of its contents.

When Paul chose to take Timothy with him, he circumcised him for the sake of the Jews (Acts 16:3). Yet, a short time before (a few months?)⁹³ Titus (a full gentile) was not compelled to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3). Paul did not compel Titus because of the false brothers who came to spy out the liberty (Galatians 2:4). This liberty is part of the good news. Paul would not yield on the liberty, because he wanted the truth regarding this good news to remain for other believers (Galatians 2:4-5). Robert Rapa does recognize the issue by clarifying the concern of the false brothers. “Their concern appears to have centered at least in part in the freedom of Jewish and Gentile Christians to associate (cf. 2:11-15) and the question of ritual implications for Jewish and Gentile Christians inherent in such association. Such relationship association is now, in Christ, to be unrestricted, unlike in the previous period of redemptive history (cf. Paul’s discussion of his stewardship of this “mystery” in Eph. 2:11-3:13).”⁹⁴ However, Rapa still sees the gospel to be about reconciliation and removal of barriers between both humanity and

⁹¹ Bruce, *Acts*, op cit. p. 215, 85, and Homer A. Kent, *Jerusalem to Rome* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972) p. 90. See also Gaebelien, *op cit*, pp. 195-196. Kent points out that this was one of the reasons that non-Jewish women were more likely to join themselves to Judaism than men, as the women could not undergo circumcision.

⁹² κενος emphasizes emptiness of content, ειρη of goal or objective, and ματαιος of outcome.

⁹³ David Smith proposed a chronology of Paul’s life. According to his chronology 16-18 months may have passed between the Acts 15 conference and Paul’s time in Derbe when he took along with him Timothy. *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, (NY: George H. Doran Company, nd) pp. 648-649.

⁹⁴ Rapa, op cit, p. 576.

God and groups of humanity.⁹⁵ Rapa is correct that the issue was about a relationship “in Christ.” It is easier to see that Paul meant something different than the gospel for initial salvation. Paul would not yield so that the truth of how believers are to live, might stand, that they might remain liberated from law.

If Paul were looking for authorization by his trip to Jerusalem, his language appears strange, “But from the ones who were of reputation (whatever then they were is no difference to me, God shows no favoritism) for the ones being of reputation added nothing to me” (Galatians 2:6). Paul knew the source of his gospel and knew the content of that gospel. He was not asking the Jerusalem leadership to evaluate accuracy of his message.

The leadership did recognize that Paul’s message was God-given. Peter was reaching the circumcision and teaching them to continue obeying the Law (Galatians 2:8). They also recognized that God was working through Paul towards Gentiles, and so they showed their approval with hand-shake of fellowship (vv. 8-9). Luke tells us they also sent along a letter expressing their confidence in what God was doing through Paul. Paul shared that letter with the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, among the churches he had begun on his first apostolic trip (Acts 15:30-31; 16:4-5). The Jerusalem church had sent along two prophets who added words of encouragement (Acts 15:32). In response, the Churches grew in the faith and increased in number (Acts 16:5).

The decision of the Jerusalem leadership was not to trouble the Gentiles who were turning to God (Acts 15:19). Peter spoke in favor of this grace message (v. 11). Listening to Paul’s message, Peter even recognized that eventually the Jews would also be saved in this same manner. These Jews were already saved, if by “saved” Peter meant initial salvation. However, if by “saved” Peter meant how the believer is to live, the Jews were not yet living by grace, but were continuing to live by law. Peter appreciated this good news of life by grace.

James spoke, after Paul and Barnabas finished telling of God’s work among the Gentiles. He stated that God was taking out from the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14). He referenced the Old Testament prophets, Amos in particular. He cited the prophets as proof that God had a place for Gentiles within His plan for Israel and the restoration of the house of David. This quotation assured the Jewish believers, that David’s great Son—Jesus Christ would one day reign, and that the inclusion of Gentiles did not preclude this or annul God’s promises to Israel. James’ citation of Amos may hint that one concern among the Jewish believers was that they would be displaced by Gentiles. Further, they may have been concerned that if the Gentiles did not have to keep the Law, it might signal the complete end of God’s work with Israel, for God gave the Law to them, and He gave it to distinguish Israel. However, James was not stating that the present situation fulfilled Amos or the other prophets. God’s work of taking out from the Gentiles a people for His name is distinct from bringing Gentiles into His

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 577.

plan for Israel.⁹⁶ If James were applying Amos to the present context, the Gentile converts should have been expected to come under the requirements of the Law. Zechariah prophesied that the Gentile families would be required to come to Jerusalem and observe the feast of booths (14:16). He further prophesied that those who did not would be punished (vv. 17-19). God's present work with Israel involves shaking them among the nations (Amos 9:9). God will in the future enter into even more severe judgment with them (Amos 9:10). When God concludes this present work with the Church, and concludes His judgment of Israel, He will return (Acts 15:16). James added these words before quoting Amos 9:11-12. James' words and his quotation assured the Jewish believers that God was not done with their nation.

Neither James nor the other leaders yet knew that God's present plans did not focus upon Israel. God's plans today involve taking out from Jews and out from Gentiles people to form a new man (Ephesians 2:15-16).⁹⁷ They did not know that God counts Jewish believers and Gentile believers to be absolute equals in the body of Christ (Ephesians 3:6). Paul stated that truth was a mystery, and one which he either did not know as of Acts 15 or did not speak to the council (Ephesians 3:4-5). The decision of the council distinguished between Jewish believers and Gentile believers by giving them separate requirements for living. In Acts 21 which happened approximate 8-9 years later, James repeated the decision of the council regarding the Gentiles (Acts 21:25). James' words revealed his understand that the Jewish believers were to remain under the law, "You see, brother, how many thousand there are among the Jews who have believed and all are **zealots of the law**" (Acts 21:20). By "law" James meant the whole Law, for they were still at the temple, still taking vows, and still offering sacrifices (Acts 21:23-24, 26). Clearly, many of these Jewish believers, New Testament believers at that, were still living by the Law. They had heard about Paul.

Tying Acts 15 and Galatians 2, we can say that in his gospel, Paul was not teaching Gentiles to be circumcised. Paul was teaching liberty, both from the Mosaic Law as well as from the flesh. Paul gospel was first expressed to Gentiles. The Jerusalem council saw a difference between the manner in which Gentiles were to live and the manner in which Jews were to live, and so they saw that God committed a different message to Paul with a different way of life from that which He committed to Peter which was a continued lifestyle under Mosaic Law. The question and debate was never about how Gentiles are saved initially, or justified at the moment of faith. The issue was how those Gentile believers were to live. Paul's gospel was not about initial salvation, but about present tense salvation or Christian living.

In Galatians 2, Paul provided a further illustration of the issue. After he and Barnabas returned to Antioch, Peter followed (2:11). We do not know why Peter followed, but it is easily deduced from his comments in Acts 15 that "but through the grace of the Lord Jesus we believe we will be saved according to the same manner as these" (v. 11). The Aorist Infinitive "be

⁹⁶ That is common Covenant teaching, which displaces ethnic Israel with "true Israel" which includes Gentiles. This does not find support in the New Testament Scriptures which distinguish the Church from Israel and distinguish God's plans for each.

⁹⁷ New [καινος] emphasizes newness of quality rather than just freshness. It indicates that this new man is different from what had previously existed.

saved” combined with the main verb “believe” in the present tense looks forward to the whole of salvation, that is it considered something future, perhaps the immediate future. Peter recognized in Paul’s explanation of his good news a truth which would eventually affect the Jewish believers in addition to the Gentile believers.

Perhaps with interest in the message of liberty, Peter arrived in Antioch. Peter began to live by the standards of this new message–this new way of life, for he was eating with Gentiles (Galatians 2:12). When some sent by James arrived, Peter then withdrew. He did so out of fear of the Jews. His actions affected the other Jews, even Barnabas, who plainly knew the message (v. 13). Paul described their actions as hypocrisy or “play acting.”⁹⁸ Paul saw they were not walking upright or correctly regarding the truth of the gospel (v. 14). Paul used this same expression, “truth of the gospel” in verse five, where Lightfoot explained, “This expression in St Paul’s language denotes the doctrine of grace, the maintenance of Christian liberty, as opposed to the false teaching of the Judaizers.”⁹⁹ “Liberty” in the sense Paul was teaching, was not part of the good news preached to the unsaved. For a time, Peter had practiced that liberty in Antioch.

Paul responded to Peter’s withdrawal with strong denunciation of Peter’s actions (Galatians 2:14). Paul spoke so all could hear, “before all.” This liberty is expressed in Paul’s words, “You being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not a Jew, why do you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews.” Peter was not only eating with Gentiles, but living as a Gentile. Gentile is an adverb [εθνικως] perhaps, but awkwardly translated “Gentilely.” The compulsion to live like a Jew is even stronger in the Greek, “to Judaize,” this word being an infinitive verb [λουδαιζειν]. In this way, the larger issue in Galatians is magnified, and we can summarize it again, are Gentile believers to live like Jews under Law?

In the remainder of Galatians 2, Paul used the matter of justification to illustrate the current problem. In speaking with Peter, they both knew that no one is justified from law works (v. 16). They both agreed that people are justified from faith concerning Christ. This was the past, this was initial salvation. It is settled. They agreed on this. When a believer comes to Christ to be justified in Him, he himself is found to be a sinner (v. 17). The need to be justified in Christ, means the individual is incapable himself, and this due to his sinful nature. Christ is not a minister of sin by justifying sinners. Christ provides the believer freedom from his problem of sin.

Righteousness is not simply a past matter. The believer is justified by works (not law works) in the present tense of his salvation (James 2:21, 24, 25). James was writing about the Christian life, not initial salvation. He is not at odds with Paul. Paul wrote that he wished to be found having righteousness from faith as opposed to righteousness from law, which would be his own righteousness (Philippians 3:9). Paul already had righteousness in Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, the righteousness about which Paul was concerned in Philippians

⁹⁸ Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 461.

⁹⁹ Lightfoot, *Galatians*, op cit. p. 107.

was his practical righteousness. For the believer, his practical righteousness is also by faith not by law. The believer's practical righteousness involves his acts of love, by which he gives to those in need (2 Corinthians 9:9, 10). This is the righteousness for which God has liberated the believer (Romans 6:12-13, 18). God intends for the Christian to live out acts of love as righteousness.

So speaking to Peter, Paul moved from the matter of initial justification to present tense daily justification in Galatians 2. He asserted that if one rebuilt the law to define his way of life, he demonstrates himself to be a transgressor (v. 18). A transgression requires law (Romans 4:17). Therefore, rather than experiencing freedom, one becomes a transgressor by returning to the Law after salvation. This was the kind of righteousness which he did not want (Philippians 3:9). This again demonstrates, that the issue in Galatians was not initial salvation but Christian living. By being put into Christ, the believer died with Christ to the law. God has accomplished this by causing the believer to suffer in Christ the penalty of the law (cf. Romans 7:7; 10:6). Paul now lives, but not himself but the indwelling Christ (Galatians 2:20). His conclusion, "I won't displace God's grace" (v. 21). If righteousness comes through law, Christ died without benefit or merit (v. 21). This is true both for initial salvation and present tense salvation.

This led Paul to ask the Galatians if they were mindless (3:1).¹⁰⁰ Remember, Paul is talking about the Christian life, and present justification within the Christian life. He questioned who had bewitched them, a word meaning to put on under a spell. As graphically as possible Paul had portrayed the crucifixion of Christ.¹⁰¹ In the light of such a portrayal, "bewitched" is his mocking explanation of their actions, turning from the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life to the law as the guide for the Christian life.

He further wished to learn from them how they had begun their Christian experience (Galatians 3:2). Did it begin by obeying the law, doing its works? Did it begin from hearing the gospel with faith? Of course it was the latter. So, he continued to question again if they were mindless (3:3). Since they began by the Spirit, were they now being matured by flesh? Beginning by the Spirit refers back to 1:6. The Spirit is the one who called them to salvation. He is the one who began their salvation (Philippians 1:6). He is the one who enacted faith within the individuals so they could respond to the gospel. He is the one who then regenerated them following their believing in Christ (John 3:5-7; Titus 3:5). As Paul said in 1:6, they were turning from Him, the Spirit, to another gospel. So, here in 3:3, they were attempting maturity by the flesh. Rapa agrees, "The Judaizers were teaching the Galatians the need for "observing the law" in order to perfect their salvation in Christ, to "attain [their] goal..."¹⁰² While I agree, his final comment is clearer, "At the very least, the Judaizers taught obedience to the law as a

¹⁰⁰ Paul used the noun *ανοητοι* from *νοος* the mind rather than foolish which would normally be *αφρονης* or *ασοφος*.

¹⁰¹ Lightfoot pointed out two meanings for *προγραφω*, "(1) 'To write beforehand,' ... (2) 'To write up in public, to placard.'" *Galatians*, op cit. p. 134.

¹⁰² Rapa, op cit. p. 591.

means to proper Christian behavior (3:19-4:11).¹⁰³ Robert Gromacki clarifies this further, “The Judaizers wanted them to be circumcised (5:2), to observe a ritualistic calendar (4:10), and to keep the Mosaic law (6:13). To them **justification by faith was a start** in the right direction, but it had to end up with justification by law (3:11; 5:4).”¹⁰⁴ If no other passage in Galatians does so, these three verses demonstrate that the issue is not the gospel at the point of initial faith, but a good news for Christian living versus living by law.

Later in Galatians three, Paul explained that they the Jews had been under the Law as a guardian (Galatians 3:24, ESV). The NASB and Darby have “tutor,” and the AV “schoolmaster.” These latter translations make the law sound like a teacher. Yet “guardian” better represents the Greek *παιδαγωγος*, explained by Burton, “A *παιδαγωγος* was a slave employed in Greek and Romans families to have general charge of a boy in the years from about six to sixteen, watching over his outward behaviour and attending him whenever he went from home, as *e. g.* to school.”¹⁰⁵ Lenski agrees with this definition, and adds concerning this guardian, “He...watched and corrected his deportment, that i might befit his station, and kept him from hurtful associations and influences, from foolish and hurtful actions.”¹⁰⁶ He gives not only an apt description of the guardian’s function but also that of the Law to the Jew. A couple paragraphs later, Lenski states, “These regulations kept the Jews from mingling with the Gentiles, the bad boys who had no guardian, whose influence and association would bring pagan contamination.”¹⁰⁷ Burton points out that Paul’s analogy emphasizes the inferiority, the immature state as a child one has when under this guardian—the Law.

For the Jew and Greek who understood the role of a guardian, Paul’s statement, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,” was clear, ‘We’re no longer children under tutors, we’re sons.’ The status of son is granted by the father to his children at the time of his choosing. Galatians 4:1-3 illustrates their understanding of adoption, or son-placement. At the point of adoption or son placement, a father took his own heir, his own child and granted him the status of son. Sonship was a privileged position in a family. Though Romans practiced adoption as we know it today, that is not the adoption which Paul describes in Galatians 4:1-5. In 3:26, we find two facts about being sons: we are son by faith, we are sons in Christ. Paul further explained that the “in Christ” relationship was accomplished by baptism in Christ (Galatians 3:27). This is not water baptism (though water baptism testifies to it), but the baptism by the Spirit, which places the believer into Christ and thereby into the body of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3).¹⁰⁸ This baptism places the believer into Christ and in Christ the believer. Graduating to the status of son required Christ to redeem the Jews out from the Law (Galatians 4:5). “Redeem” in this instance is *exagaradzo*, the prefixed preposition

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 591.

¹⁰⁴ Gromacki, *Galatians* op cit, pp. 80-81.

¹⁰⁵ Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1962) p. 200.

¹⁰⁶ R.C.H. Lenski, op cit, p. 181.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*. pp. 181-182.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Schreiner makes this the initiatory rite of water baptism. *Galatians* op cit, pp. 256-257, see especially fn 8. Though Schreiner does rightly see water baptism as picturing incorporation in Christ.

ek emphasizing the removal out from. Since the Law acted as a guardian for the Jews, and kept them in a state of immaturity, God had to remove them from the Law so they could mature, so they could become sons.

For the Gentile Galatian believers this emphasized their already better position. Why would they wish to move to a position under law, a position which required them to live under a guardian and to be immature. So he reminds the Gentiles of their former position enslaved to false gods (Galatians 4:8). So, now that they knew God, or are known by God, they were turning back to the weak and poor basics and to these becoming enslaved (4:9). The basics or elements refer to the commands of the law.¹⁰⁹ Paul used this word in 4:3 of the slave-like status of a child before he becomes a son. The word occurs in Colossians 2:20, where Paul related the legal principles to the world system (it operates by laws of various sorts). He also clarified the nature of those basic elements, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch.” This is a good summation of much of the Law. Galatians 4:10 also clarifies that these basics are law and rules, and specifically as they pertain to the legal festivals. This also demonstrates that being circumcised was only the first step. Those who were bringing this contrary message of Christian living by law intended the Galatians believers to fully live by law, even the keeping of festivals. The word “basics” or “elements” “was used of the letters of the alphabet, as elements of speech.”¹¹⁰ The idea of basic speech matches Paul’s choice of *napios* translated “children,” a word which emphasized the inability to articulate, to speak sensibly. By extension Greeks used it for anyone who acted immature or foolish. To suggest that the Galatians were turning to the basic elements implied that spiritually they were young children trying to learn to speak plainly again. As the Jews were immature under the law, so the Galatians would render themselves immature by turning to the Law.

Therefore, the true gospel discussed in Galatians is not about initial justification by faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone, but about living by grace alone in Christ alone by faith alone by the Spirit alone. The theme addresses how believers are to mature, how believers are to practically move on to sonship, following the Spirit’s lead. Paul did not write Galatians regarding the good news for the unbeliever, but regarding a good news for believers. He concerned himself with the Galatians leaving the Holy Spirit who called them to salvation and would lead them if they would follow. But leaving that Spirit and turning to a false good news about Christian living by law, was to abandon the leading of the Spirit. Though Paul does not call it “my gospel” in Galatians, God had specially entrusted that gospel to Paul.

Three times Paul used the expression “my gospel.” First in Romans 2:16, Paul stated that God will one day judge the hidden things of man through Jesus Christ. The context contrasts Gentiles doing law-like activities versus Jews transgressing the law (2:23). Is this the final Great White throne judgment at which unbelievers are consigned to Hell? If it is, the

¹⁰⁹ The NASB translates στοιχεια “elementary things” and “elementary principles.”

¹¹⁰ Vine, *Dictionary*, op cit. p. 362.

Gentiles obeying law would not be judged. The only individuals subject to judgment at the Great White throne are the dead, that is, the spiritual dead—the unbelievers (Revelation 20:12). In Romans 2:16 “day” is anarthrous, which indicates a quality of day, as opposed to a specific day. God judges individuals at different points in time. Therefore, any time at which God exercises formal judgment is a day of judgment. Most unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne, some being judged approximately 1,000 years prior at the judgment of the servants (Jews) and the sheep and goats (Gentiles) as Jesus described in Matthew 25. Jesus promised that believers will not come into judgment (John 5:24; 3:18). All judgment due our sin was laid upon Jesus. Any judgement of the believer’s sins, even post-salvation sins, impugns the work of Christ. Jesus will judge the believer’s works at the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). The judgment seat of Christ is not a judgment of sin, but an evaluation of how one built upon the foundation which is Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12). Therefore, “day” in Romans 2:16 allows for any day God judges whether that is the judgment of the lost or judgment of the believer’s works.

Paul’s gospel is the standard for judging individuals. We obviously understand the gospel as a standard for judging the lost, however, how is that gospel the standard for judging the secret things of men, even believers (Romans 2:16)? 1 Corinthians 4:5 eludes to the judgment seat of Christ. Paul referenced the judgment seat in 1 Corinthians 3 when our works or how we built upon the foundation is evaluated. Our works of building are metaphorically compared to valuable metals and stones or easily combustible materials (vv. 11-13). What is the standard for evaluating these works? What distinguishes gold, silver, and precious stones from wood, hay and stubble? At first it may be as simple as whether one has done a work which God desires versus a work which one has invented of his own accord. Christianity is replete with “good works” which God has neither directed nor desires: building edifices in the name of Christ,¹¹¹ going to war in the name of Christ, championing political causes in the name of Christ. However, often believers have seen in Scripture the works which God desires and they have performed these. Are such works automatically gold, silver, and valuable stones? Paul addressed this in 1 Corinthians 4:5, that the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make plainly visible the determinations of the hearts. The two sides of this judgment demonstrates motives behind believers’ works. Some believers perform good works which God desires, but their motives are questionable, perhaps even negative. Paul wrote about believers who were proclaiming Christ with negative motives wishing to add pressure to Paul’s chains (Philippians 1:15, 17-18). They were doing the correct work, and in this Paul rejoiced (Philippians 1:18), but their motives were not pure and in this way their works **may** metaphorically be wood, hay and stubble. I say “may” because we are not the judge. This was Paul’s first point in 1 Corinthians 4:5, “don’t judge anything before the time.” By this, Paul meant to judge the motives of others. Later in the same letter, Paul told the Corinthians to judge a brother and to judge between believers engaged in a lawsuit. Therefore, believers are to judge but they are not to judge motives, which is Paul’s point in 4:5. Christ alone is the knower of the heart, and hence one’s motives (Acts 1:24; Revelation 2:23).

¹¹¹ A friend used to refer to this as building “God boxes.”

Paul's reference to his gospel in 2 Timothy 2:8 helps us understand how that gospel is the measure of God's judgment. In the 2 Timothy passage, Paul wrote, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel." Paul's gospel focused on Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and His being a real descendant of David. This parallels Paul's statement in Romans 16 regarding the proclamation about Jesus Christ. Paul's gospel focused on the person of Jesus Christ. Though Paul's comments in Galatians might lead us to think that it focuses upon the Holy Spirit, we should be reminded of our Lord's words that the Spirit does not primarily draw attention to Himself but to Christ (John 16:13-14). Second, Paul's gospel focused on Jesus' Christ's resurrected status. The verb "risen" [NASB] is a Perfect tense emphasizing His present continuing state based on a past act, therefore, He was raised and is in that state. Too often Bible teachers focus on the earthly teachings and life of Jesus, His miracles and signs. For Paul, Jesus' present position and activity are equally important! His being alive in His resurrected status is crucial to various ministries and connections to believers. Third, Paul's gospel focused on Jesus Christ being a real descendant from David. In various contexts this relationship ties to various truths: being the Anointed One, the rightful Ruler, or here a genuine human being with real ancestry. Historically, among those claiming to be Christians, the early centuries of the Church were marked more by controversy over Christ's true humanity than His deity.¹¹² If He were not truly human He could neither have died nor needed to be raised from the dead. It is in His glorified humanity that Jesus sits at the Father's righthand, and as a real human He acts as our highpriest, our position, our access to God, and our present propitiation. As the Son of man, Jesus is the judge (John 5:27). Each of these rest upon His being a real man.

Romans 2:16 can encompass the judgment of believer's works, but it also involves the judgment of the unsaved. The judgment of the unsaved does not determine whether one goes to Hell or not. Towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described a time in which people would appeal to their "good works" "in the name" of Jesus (Matthew 7:21-22). These people prophesied, cast out demons and performed works of power (popularly—miracles). Yet Jesus instructs them to depart because He never knew them (v. 23). "Knew" translates the verb γινωσκω [*ginosko*] indicating experiential knowledge. Jesus knew them in His divine omniscience, but not know them experientially, that is no relationship ever existed between them. This is the reason they are told to depart. Similarly, Revelation 20:15 indicates that those cast into the Lake of Fire are not written in the book of Life. They have not participated in life. Jesus revealed that eternal life is not about living forever (everyone lives forever), but it is about experientially knowing God (Revelation 17:3). So the names of these are not in the book of life, because they don't have life, and because they don't have life, they do not experientially know God, and God does not experientially know them. The unsaved spend eternity away from God in the lake of fire because He does not know them and they do not know Him.

¹¹² J. Ed Komosezewski, M. James Sawyer, Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006) p. 200. "What's the upshot of all this? Simply that second-century debates over the nature of Christ were far more concerned with his earthly qualities than his heavenly status. In the world in which the church Fathers lived and wrote, embracing the divinity of Jesus wasn't the problem. Embracing his *humanity* was." [emphasis theirs]

In connection with their being cast into the Lake of Fire, they are also judged based upon their works. Remember, their works do not determine whether or not they go to Hell. No one is saved based upon his personal good works, but upon the work of Christ alone. In fact, concerning one of the smaller books¹¹³ mentioned in Revelation we find that the names in it were written from the foundation of the world and the names of those who are unsaved were never written in those books (Revelation 13:8; 17:8). Revelation 20:12 reveals that God has more than one set of books which are present at the judgment of the unsaved. We just looked at the book of life, but this passage also reveals plural books regarding their works, “and books were opened, and a similar book was opened which is the *book of life*.” Note, the text has a singular book of life and plural books regarding their works. Revelation 20 does not explain how they are judged according to their works, or the nature of their works. Most Bible students immediately equate works with sin. However, those who do such works might think otherwise. In Matthew 7:23, after Jesus tells the lost to depart from Him, He describes them as workers of lawlessness.¹¹⁴ This appears to be His evaluation of their “good works” in His “name.” They prophesied, cast out demons and performed miracles, but He evaluated those works as lawlessness, for He is the knower of hearts and judges not the work from an outside perspective, but judges the motives.

We can see His evaluation of the motives of the unsaved in Romans 2:8. Their works, whatever they might appear to human eyes, are done from [εκ] selfish ambition and disobedience to the truth while obeying unrighteousness. In the context each of these problems tie to one’s attitude toward God. The unsaved do not experientially know God. Therefore, their works are done from their own selfish ambition. Paul described this in Romans 1:21, “Because not **knowing** God, they did not glorify Him as God nor thanked Him...” Rather than seeking God’s glory, they pursued their own selfish ambition. In 1:25 we find, “They exchanged the Truth concerning God by the Lie, and worshipped and did priestly service to the creature rather than the One creating.” The Truth concerning God explains that God alone is capable of anything of value. The Lie communicates to the creature that he is capable of great things without God.¹¹⁵ Such actions are disobedient to the Truth. Lastly, 1:28 explains that they went so far as to disapprove of having God in their experiential knowledge. They didn’t even want to know God, much less think about Him as He reveals Himself. Within the sphere of Christendom, many talk about God, but they talk about Him from a human perspective, remaking God in the image man, and interpreting God in terms of human psychology, sociology, and biology. Paul had earlier described this as “suppressing the Truth by unrighteousness” (v. 18). They suppress the Truth by their unrighteous way of thinking, learning, and acting so that God is barely recognizable.

God has planned good works for the believer (Ephesians 2:10). Having reminded the Ephesians that God saved them by His grace, he went on to explain that also by God’s grace, God has previously planned good works for the believer to do. We might think of it as God

¹¹³ The word for the book of life is βιβλος a scroll or book, and the other books are βιβλιον a diminutive form of the former.

¹¹⁴ It is the articular nominative plural participle οἱ εργαζόμενοι— “the ones working.”

¹¹⁵ Recall the serpent’s word to Eve, “You shall be as God,” and “knowing good and evil.”

having filled in our calendar or to-do planner with opportunities. We may do those works He has planned or we may fail to do so. In a day-planner we might check off those activities we accomplished. Perhaps God likewise checks off those activities we accomplished, which He planned for us.

It is possible that that for the all people, God has likewise prepared good works. In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus speaks of a judgment based upon the idea that God has present opportunities and the unsaved have consistently failed to perform any of those works. He gave four statements about judgment. Matthew 24:45-51 contrasts a slave found doing his Lord's will versus one who not only fails to do so but mistreats his fellow slaves. In this context, the slaves refer to God's people Israel. The kingdom is also compared to ten virgins awaiting the return of the groom from the wedding (Matthew 25:1-13). The virgins do not represent the Church, for the church is the groom's bride and she is a mystery and therefore absent from the wedding parables in the gospels (cf Ephesians 5:31-32). The virgins represent Jews anticipating the coming of their king. However, some unprepared for the wait and miss His coming. When they later ask for admission to the bridal chamber (as witnesses) they are denied with His words, "I do not know you" (v. 12). This "know" is *oida*, as the groom claims to not even know who they are (remember this is a comparison). The next statement compares the nation Israel (again seen as slaves) during the absence of their king and entrusted with responsibility during that time. Each slave is entrusted with an amount of silver.¹¹⁶ In approximate modern dollar amounts, the first is given 200,000 dollars worth of silver, the second 80,000 and the last 42,000. Each is a significant amount of money. Two use their money well and the last does nothing with it but protect it by hiding it. When the Lord returns, the slaves are judged based upon how they used what they had. The two that used what they had for the Lord's work are rewarded appropriately (vv. 21, 23).¹¹⁷ The one who did nothing but hide his is cast into outer darkness, an expression indicating separation from God (something not true of a believer) (v. 30; cf. Matthew 8:12; 22:13). All three above statement about judgment were related to the nation of Israel and their Messiah's return.

The last statement of judgment is that of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). While the last statements addressed Israel, this statement addresses the nations—the Gentiles (v. 32). The sheep represent believing Gentiles and the goats –unbelieving Gentiles. Note that when they stand at this judgment, their state as a believer (sheep) or unbeliever (goat) is already established. This judgment will demonstrate what they deserve, and either the faithfulness to the God-ordained good works or their failure. Christ presents the same opportunities to both: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, caring for the traveler (stranger), clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned (vv. 35-36, 42-43). Yet having addressed both groups, neither remembers doing these to Christ. He point out that "Upon as much as you have done to one of these the least of my brothers, you have done it to me" (v. 40), or in 45 they failed to do so.

¹¹⁶ In verse 18, ἀργύριον is the Greek word for silver but is translated "money" in the NASB, AV, ESV.

¹¹⁷ As an aside, this is not the judgment of believers in the Church. The future of the Church is a united whole, sharing equally in God's future plans. This demonstrates a distinction not only in the way of life between the Church and Israel but the idea that under Law, individual Israelis could earn a better resurrection and better future.

“The least of these my brothers” refers to the believing Jews,¹¹⁸ and specifically the 144,000 witnesses scattered over the surface of the earth during the last half of Daniel’s 70th week (cf. Revelation 7). These Jews will be living in the worst time this earth has ever experienced. Food, water, clothing will be at a high premium, yet they share what they have. Taking time to visit the imprisoned will put one in danger of suffering the same fate. Both have the same opportunities; both experience the same hardships of that future time, and yet they are distinguished by how they respond. They are not judged for doing horrible crimes, or vile acts. They are judged for not meeting the opportunities which God presents to them.

In John 3 Jesus spoke about His coming into the world as light entering a dark place. However, mankind hated the light and loved darkness because their deeds are evil (v. 19). This word evil is *poneros* [πονηρος]. Like the milder *kakos* it indicates that which lack in the character which one would expect. It is a stronger term than *kakos* because it is malignant, it wishes to spread. It influences others to act in the same manner. Then in verse 20, He added, “Everyone practicing the worthless thing hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works be exposed.” The ESV translates “worthless thing” “wicked.” It is the Greek *phaulon* and indicates that which is frivolous and “worthless, ‘good for nothing.’”¹¹⁹ The unsaved live in denial, refusing to acknowledge their need for God. As such their works are worthless. They may have highly rated self-evaluated works. Objectively their works amount to nothing. If they approached the light and saw their works in light of true righteousness their works would be exposed. *Phaulos* is also used in John 5:29 where Jesus contrasts the resurrection of life for those who did good (that which makes for a sense of wellbeing) to the resurrection of judgment for those practicing that which is worthless. Like Jesus, when the believer walks in the light, his life also exposes the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11). Again, note that it is not particularly vile works which are in question, though those are also mentioned. Rather their works are unfruitful. Their works are not a visible fruit of light in the sphere of goodness, righteousness, and truth (v. 9). Goodness [*agathos*] is not a reference to moral, but to that which provides for a sense of legitimate contentment and sense of well being. The works of the unsaved world are often motivated by and consist of attempts to change that which leaves the world unsatisfied and discontent. Second, righteousness in this present time consists primarily of selfless acts of love for others (cf. Galatians 5:5-6, 13; 2 Corinthians 9:9, 10; cntr. 1 John 3:10). We have already seen that the works of the unbeliever are done in selfish ambition. Finally, the fruit is in the sphere of truth, it is genuine. It is always possible for individuals to learn what a good or righteous work should look like and to mimic that without it being genuinely good or righteous. The determination lies in the motivation, which no one but God can genuinely see or evaluate. This again contrasts the nature the works of the saved and unsaved as bases for judgment, not to determine eternal destiny.

¹¹⁸ Jesus used the expression “my brothers” three times. In addition to the present text, Matthew and Mark have Jesus’ response regarding who is His mother and brothers (Matthew 12:48-50; Mark 3:33-35). In both instances, He indicated this His disciples were His brothers. Jesus explained that His brothers are those who do the will of His Father. Matthew and John also record Jesus’ post-resurrection instructions to the women, “go and tell my brothers.” Both references are regarding His disciples. Alfred Plummer favored this view. “What is added in Jn XX. 17, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father,’ as a message to these brethren, looks as if the disciples were meant.” *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, nd) p. 422.

¹¹⁹ Samuel G. Green, *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament*, (NY: Fleming H Revel Co., nd) p. 378.

Jesus indicated that in the judgment, it would be better for some than for others. Jesus issued woes over the the cities of His day for their failure to properly respond to Him as King of Israel (Matthew 11:21-24; cf. 10:15; Luke 10:12-15). He pronounced a woe over Capernaum in verse 24. He stated that it would be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum. Certainly Sodom is not going to be granted access to heaven. Rather the result of the judgment in that day will be different than that which Capernaum will receive. Judgment in the lake of fire cannot be the same for all individuals, or Sodom's judgment would not be more tolerable than Capernaum's. Sodom rejected some light, but Capernaum rejected the light of the incarnate Son of God and the miracles which He performed. God showed them more, they rejected more and their judgment will, therefore, be more severe. How it will be more severe is not stated in Scripture, only the fact.

God will judge men in keeping with Paul's gospel. Paul's gospel involves the person of Jesus Christ. It involves the secret things of mankind. It involves this one who is both God and man, this one who knows the hearts of all men, and is able to judge men's motives (Acts 1:24). How does these facts act as a standard for judgment?

The person of Christ and past tense salvation

In John 16:8-12, Jesus revealed the coming convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit. That ministry has begun with the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts two. The Spirit now convinces the world of three problems: they are guilty of sin because they do not believe on Him; they lack the righteousness to enter the presence of God; they will be judged because of the first two problems. All three relate to the Son. He is the object of faith, which they must choose to believe. The object is Christ, not only His death but the fact that He is risen and alive. Those who believe are then counted to be righteous in Christ for the living and ascended Christ is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Christ is righteous, and because of His righteousness He was able to go to the Father where they could not see Him. Those who do not believe do not have that righteousness in Christ, and will therefore come into judgment. Those who have believed are promised to never come into judgment (John 5:24). Why does God judge those who do not believe and do not have the righteousness of Christ? They have not obeyed the Truth. They have followed the lie and convinced themselves that they can be righteous without Christ's work. They may even name the name of Christ, but their hope for the future is founded on their efforts or their reimagined versions of Jesus (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:4). When Jesus told a crowd of Jews to stop working for the food that perishes but to work for that which continues to eternal life, they asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:27-28). Mankind arrogantly believes he is capable of doing whatever God asks. God knows better. God has provided the means for man to be right with God and it by the work of Jesus Christ, by God's grace and through faith. While some of the related matters may have been different at the time Jesus spoke with these Jews, it illustrates the man's chronic problem. So, Jesus responded, "This is the work of/from God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (v. 29). All God has ever asked man to do for salvation is to believe. However, Jesus' audience of chronic unbelievers replied to Him, "Then what sign to You do, so that we may see and believe You?" (v. 30). God judges the unsaved because they fail to believe

in Jesus Christ as He is described in Scripture, and put confidence in their good works, not those which God planned for them. God judges mankind by the standard of Paul's gospel which emphasizes the real God-man Jesus Christ who is alive.

The person of Christ and present tense salvation.

Similarly, this good news of Paul is the standard by which God stabilizes believers. Believers have believed in Jesus Christ and have not trusted in their works to be righteous before God. However, while believers are different from the unsaved by their faith in Christ, they sometimes are like the unsaved in the way in which they live. I do not mean their horrible sinful activity, though at times that is true, but their misplaced confidence in their present ability to be righteous before God. Some of the believers in the Galatian churches were doing this. They were attempting to be justified by observing law works. This is not justification in the past, but justification in the present, that is, in daily living. As we saw, this was the reason for Paul's letters to the Galatians. Remember: the Galatians could leave the gospel and remain saved, indicating that the gospel in question cannot be that which tells the unsaved what Christ has done so that he might be forgiven and right with God. The gospel in question tells about the present ministry of the Holy Spirit. It further tells about who Jesus Christ is for the believer in the present tense. Like the unsaved who can only be saved if they believe, believers also can only go on in salvation and become stable as they trust who Christ is for them right now! This leads to Paul's next measure by which God stabilizes believers.

The Proclamation of Jesus Christ

In addition to Paul's gospel, God also stabilizes believers in accord with the proclamation of Jesus Christ. It is necessary for believers to know who Jesus Christ is. An unsaved individual must know certain facts about Christ in order to be saved. He needs to know that Christ is God, became man, died in place of His sins, was buried, rose again, and was seen of many. God does not require the individual to have a detailed understanding of all these truths, but in some way, he must know these so that he can believe them. However, God has revealed much more about the Son for those who have believed. The present work and position of God the Son have tremendous implications for how the believers lives his life as well as being the basis for proper motivation for Christian living.

While the New Testament reveals many of these truths regarding Jesus Christ, Paul's references to Jesus Christ in Romans will be my focus. In the opening verses, Paul makes five claims regarding Jesus Christ. First, the Old Testament prophets prophesied of Him (1:2). The words, "which He promised through His prophets," specifically refer to the gospel from God at the end of verse one. The expression is unique, for the noun "God" is anarthrous. Five times these words are combined with the definite article.¹²⁰ When "God" is used without the article it often refers generally to the Godhead. Therefore, this gospel of or from God should in the

¹²⁰ Three of these emphasize a specific aspect of God's work (1 Thessalonians 2:2, 8, 9). Mark 1:14 has this expression in which Jesus came proclaiming this message about His being God, belief in which was a requirement for salvation during His earthly ministry. The last reference in Romans 15:16 involves how God is served. The verse contains temple language: people work-*λειτουργος*, temple/priest work-*ιερουγεω*, offering-*προσφορα*. All refer to Paul's work among the Gentiles, that they might be an acceptable offering. It indicates that part of the believer's priestly work involves helping other believers live the life God has intended for them.

context involve all three persons of the Trinity. So in verse two, the one Who promised is the Father, in verse three the One promised is the Son, and in verse four the one distinguishing the Son is the Holy Spirit. All three persons cooperating in a work or set of works described as good news.

Always the Son

That good news about the Son of God was prophesied during Old Testament times. The prophets told that this one would be God's Son, would be man, would be God, would be a prophet like Moses, would be King, would be Priest, would die, would live. These truths and more are found in the Old Testament. In the context of Romans, where Paul is concerned for the stability of saints, law will not be the guide of the Christian way of life, yet the Law contained revelation about this One who has provided us liberty from the Law and sin. Certainly the New Testament contains new revelation regarding the Son, but His identity was not a new thing. Jesus, Himself told the Jewish leaders that their own Scriptures testified about Him (John 5:39).

This Jesus, the Son of God is also a descendant of David in the sphere of His human nature¹²¹ (Romans 1:3). The Roman believers who probably struggled the most with their stability were those of Jewish ancestry. Yet they should not think of the Son as being wholly distinct from them, as though He were a Gentile person, or invention. Rather, He was a real Jew and not just any Jew, but one from the very family of David. It was an individual of Jewish descent Who secured our liberty from the Law, a truth essential to stability. In 10:4, He is Christ, who ended the Law as a means of righteousness for believers. Christ lays emphasis on His anointed status, as the God-man, and as a man descended from David.

God defined the boundaries within which He would make known the Son of God (1:4). The participle *οριθεντος* from *οριζω* involves the setting of boundaries.¹²² It is often translated by some form of "predestine," though the idea of ultimate destiny is less the issue than that of how one goes. This is borne out by the fact that He was already the Son, therefore, He was not being predestined to become the Son. This limited understanding of the participle probably accounts for the even more inaccurate translation "declared" [AV, NASB, ESV] or the "appointed" [NIV]. Rather, God always related to the Son as His Son, not as to a created being (which He was not). This follows from Psalm 2:7 in which this one is "My Son."

The remainder of Romans 1:4 consists of three prepositional phrases: by power, according to *the* Spirit of holiness, out of a resurrection from dead ones. Most interpreters attempt to tie all three phrases to one event, i.e. the resurrection. It is also possible that each phrase distinctly connects to the boundaries of His being Son. He was marked **by** power. He came in power. He did works of power (popularly called miracles; cf. Matthew 11:20, 21, 23; 13:58). He was displayed before the world by the power He exercises (Acts 2:22). Other recognized His distinctive power (Matthew 13:54). Though He lived among sinful people, He

¹²¹ "According to the flesh" refers to His human nature and at the same time reminds us that He is more, He is God.

¹²² "1. *to separate, mark off by boundaries.*" G. Abbott-Smith, op cit, p. 323.

remained holy or set apart. The Spirit who generated the Son's human nature assured that what was generated would be holy (Matthew 3:11), and therefore holiness was a measure of His identity. An unclean spirit identified Him as the Holy One of God (Mark 1:24). His disciples acknowledged this (John 6:69). The Jewish leaders rejected the Holy and Righteous One (Acts 3:14). Thirty times, Isaiah spoke of the Holy One, most all referring to the Son. All these are due to the fact that the Spirit assured that the Son's humanity would be holy and therefore, no conflict existed between the Son's divinity and humanity. Finally, His resurrection was a source [ἐξ < ἐκ] forming a boundary in which He operated as Son. Because the Son is deity, He was not only raised by God, but He also raised Himself (John 10:17-18). Peter stated that it was not possible that He could be held in the grip of death (Acts 2:24).

Paul's introduction to the matter of stability, necessitates an introduction to the Son. The Son was revealed in the Old Testament, was a real Jew from David's family. He operated within the bounds of being Son for that was what He was and He could be no other. Those boundaries included His power, His holiness and His resurrection. This led into Paul's final key point, that through the Son, they had received grace and apostleship (Romans 1:5). One focus of that apostleship was obedience of faith for the the Gentiles on behalf of His name or character. Christ-like character would only be seen in those who learned to operate by faith. Grace was part of Paul's message as was faith, and yet both are tied to the Person of Jesus Christ accurately portrayed in Scripture. This obedience of faith and grace are two principles which Paul will later relate as principles which cooperate (Romans 4:16) as opposed to conflicting principles such as grace and works (Romans 11:6). This also agrees with Paul's gospel as he elaborated upon it in Galatians. He contrasted beginning by the Spirit and a hearing consisting of faith to beginning by law (Galatians 3:2-3). Therefore, while Paul's gospel brings in the ministry of the Spirit by grace and faith, in Romans Paul joined these truths with the identity of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ the Judge (2:16)

God will judge the secret things through Jesus Christ (2:16). Though the verse states that God will judge, the preposition *dia* indicates the channel through whom God judged. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). Therefore, Jesus Christ will be the judge of those secret things. That Jesus Christ is the judge is quite significant for the believer. The judge has the ability to condemn. Yet our judge is Jesus Christ, and He is the one who died, was raised, is at God's right hand, and intercedes for us (Romans 8:34). If He does all that on our behalf, condemning the believer would be counterproductive, He would be working against His purpose and work. Rather, those who are in Christ are free of condemnation (Romans 8:1).

Jesus Christ the object of faith (3:22)

The Law demonstrated man's guilt (Romans 3:19). God gave Israel the Law so they might serve as an example to the whole world, and by so doing God has stopped the mouth of everyone in the world proving their guilt. The Law was not given to make anyone righteous before God, but to demonstrate man's unrighteousness (v. 20). It did this well. "It has been part of Paul's method to demonstrate in the section leading up to this point of the argument that that law cannot bring salvation. It can show up the problem; it can and does make clear that all

are sinners. But it can do no more.”¹²³ Therefore, the law leaves man unrighteous not righteous.

God has made His righteousness plainly visible (Romans 3:21). The word “righteousness” is anarthrous, therefore, it points to an aspect or sample of God’s righteousness, not to His righteousness in its entirety. That would mean an attribute of God. Neither Paul nor his audience are God or gods, and this righteousness to be had is therefore a sample of God’s whole righteousness. This righteousness comes through faith concerning¹²⁴ Christ (v. 22). This righteousness is given to those who believe without distinction as to racial background. As stated in many passages, Christ is the object of our faith. We believe in what He did (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), but more accurately, we believe in Christ, Himself as He is defined by His work.

The word “without distinction” at the end of 3:22 remind us that it did not take more or less to save anyone. We were equally lost, equally guilty, and equally righteous through faith. Jews have no advantage in this regard, nor do Gentiles. Therefore, 3:23 reminds us that we all sinned. The grammar is the same Paul employs in Romans 5:12 where he posits our sin with Adam. Paul does not mean individual acts of sinning during our own lives, but a joint act in Adam. We all sinned, whether Jew or Greek. Since no difference exists regarding sin, God makes no distinction as to our righteousness. God also makes no distinction as to righteousness because all believe in the same Jesus Christ.¹²⁵

God has provided a liberating redemption [απολυτρωσις] in Christ (3:24)

The New Testament writers employed at least four different words which each involved some idea of redemption, or the paying of a price. The verb *agoradzō* simply emphasized purchasing something, *peripoiēō* follows emphasizing that what is purchased is now one’s special or unique possession. The verb *lutroō* indicated the payment of a ransom. This verb also occurs in the perfective nominal form *apolutrosis* where the prefixed preposition *apo* adds the idea of separation and therefore that not only has the ransom been paid but release or freedom has been secured or accomplished. In the case of believers, it is not freedom from an enemy who has taken an innocent hostage. We sinned against God and brought ourselves under our own judgment, and rendered ourselves captives of our own depraved natures. Biblically, this redemption has freed us from both the penalty of our sin as well as the dominion of our sinful natures.

We believers are declared righteous through means of the redemption that has secured our freedom (Romans 3:24). The word “justified” in Romans 3:24 is the verb form of the noun righteousness in verses 21 and 22. The verb indicates what God does so that we may have righteousness, He declares us righteous. “Through the redemption in Christ Jesus” explains the avenue through which God provides us righteousness. Christ Jesus paid the price sufficient to secure our release. In Christ that sufficient price is applied and we are freed. With the price

¹²³ Morris, op cit. p. 174.

¹²⁴ I take “of Christ” - χριστου - as a Genitive of Reference, where Christ is the object or reference of our faith.

¹²⁵ By this statement I mean that all those in this present dispensation, or all those since the day of Pentecost in which God inaugurated the Church following Christ’s death.

paid, and the freedom secured, God as judge can lower the gavel and declare us righteous in Christ. We did nothing to be righteous. Christ did everything, and we are righteous in Him on the basis of what He has done.

God displayed Christ to be the place of satisfaction [ἰλαστηριον] (3:25)

Among the tabernacle's furnishings which God instructed Moses to build the ark of the covenant was the crucial yet seldom seen piece placed in the holy of holies. It was a box (i.e. and ark) overlaid with gold. Upon this box was an ornate lid topped with the images of two cherubs. The lid of this box has often been called the mercy seat. The words "mercy seat" are used to translate the noun *kophereth* from the verb *kapher*. Alexander Harkavy defined the Hebrew *kapher* "to cover ... to overlay, to besmear ... to cover sin, to forgive."¹²⁶ "To forgive" is interpretative and not the actual meaning. Forgiveness may have been extended due to covering, but it is not the meaning. Harkavy also offered "to make expiation, or atonement for" as possible translations. But like "forgive" these are interpretive. 22 times the NASB and ESV use the expression "mercy seat" to translate *kophereth*, while the NET Bible translates these "atonement lid" which does come closer. However, even this translation requires us to define "atonement." What happened on this lid may help us understand how best to represent the word. One day a year, the high priest entered the holiest with blood and a short branch of a bush. He would dip the branch in the blood and through the thick smoke of a censer, he would reach out over the lid, perhaps feeling the outstretched wings of the cherubs and sprinkle blood upon the lid. We can say that the blood became a covering upon the cover of the box. God manifested His presence between the wings of the cherubs above the lid of the box. Beneath the lid, within the box were the tablets on which the law was written. The law was the testimony against Israel, as they so frequently failed to guard and do it. For this reason the ark is also called the ark of testimony (Exodus 25:16, 21). By sprinkling the blood on the lid, the priest was making a temporary covering over tablets which testified to the sins of the people. He was covering over the testimonies of Israel's failures. The priest enacted a literal covering with blood which figuratively represented a spiritual covering. It is this spiritual covering upon which interpreters have focused and chosen to look at it as more like an expiation or atonement, words which do not have meaning in everyday life for the modern reader. To the average Jew at the time of Moses *kopher* had meaning that made sense. They could picture a literal covering and by extension a metaphorical covering over their wrongs, their sins. Having done this, God was satisfied for another year, and would continue to dwell above the ark, between the cherubs in the middle of the people of Israel.

Paul referred to this lid of the box in Hebrews 9:5. In that passage, Paul used the Greek *hilastarion*, the word he used in Romans 3:25. This word helps us understand the purpose of the Old Testament *kophereth*, as the place or location at which God was satisfied. However, that

¹²⁶ Alexander Harkavy, *Student's Hebrew and Chaldean Dictionary to the Old Testament*, (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1914) p. 308 [כִּפֶּר]. The idea of "cover" is rejected by modern lexicographers. R. Laird Harris in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* states that this word once thought to be tied to an Arabic root which meant to "cover," or "conceal" is no longer accepted. He writes, "the Hebrew root is not used to mean 'cover.'" op. cit. However, in Genesis 6:14, God told Noah to "cover" the ark with "pitch." The noun "pitch" is a cognate of the verb "cover," "to *kapherath* . . . with *kopher*." Additionally, Harris states that this verb only occurs in the intensive stems never in the simple Qal, yet it is in the Qal in the above passage.

covering or satisfaction was only temporary and the sins of the people were not sent away. In fact by the repetition of this ritual, they were reminded of their sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). Therefore, in Romans 3:25, this word, which the Jews would have recognized in connection with the ark and ritual, Paul employs to describe Jesus Christ. In the person of Jesus Christ, God is now satisfied permanently, in a manner which He was never satisfied by the repeated yearly sacrifices of Israel.

This permanent satisfaction in the person of Jesus Christ stabilizes believers. How can one become stable, if he knows that next year he would be required to repeat this process of sacrifice, entering and sprinkling? He could not. Therefore, God set forth¹²⁷ Jesus Christ as this location. The verb set forth is in the Middle voice, meaning that God has done this for Himself. He has not asked us to satisfy Him, but He has provided for His own satisfaction in the person of Jesus Christ. Should we sin, the Father need only turn to His righthand and Jesus Christ is the place of satisfaction regarding those sins (cf. 1 John 2:2, where He is also Advocate).

He was delivered for our trespasses, raised for our justification (4:25).

Every believer in Jesus Christ, knows that Christ died for His sins. If he doesn't know this, he can't be a believer. However, Christ not only died for our sins, He also was delivered for our trespasses.¹²⁸ Ephesians 2:1 states that we were in a state of spiritual death by means of both our sins and our trespasses. In the Greek both nouns have the definite article and are connected by the conjunction *kai*. This construction was observed by Grandville Sharp [that's his name] to distinguish two nouns. Therefore, whatever sins and trespasses might have in common, Paul's use of this construction was intended to emphasize a distinction. According to Paul, a sin is an action outside (exterior to) the body (1 Corinthians 6:18). In Romans 5, Paul will establish that man is fallen or corrupted due to Adam's trespass not his sin. Man dies because of Adam's sin, but his corrupted nature resulted from a decision Adam made prior to his sin. Simply, a trespass is mental unrighteousness. It may constitute the decision to act contrary to God's will, even if one never does the act. It may involve choosing to think about something contrary to God's will rather than doing it. Sin is concrete in the sense that it is an act! A trespass is not concrete because it is in the mind. It is none the less significant. As Ephesians 2:1 states, it is one of the means by which we were spiritual dead; therefore – significant.

Christ died for my trespasses. Yes, He died for my sins, but He also died for my trespasses. Colossians 1:14 states that I am forgiven my sins, but Ephesians 1:7 states that I am forgiven my trespasses.¹²⁹ When Christ was on the cross, the Father not only imputed my sins to Him, but He was imputing the trespasses of the world to Him (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). In this way, Paul then wrote, "He (the Father) made Him (the Son) who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become God's kind of righteousness in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The expression "to be sin for us" is referring not just to Christ bearing our acts of sin, but God counting or imputing Him to be a sinful, fallen creature like us. This transpired during Christ's last three

¹²⁷ προεθετο Aor. Mid. Ind. < προτιθημι to set out, set forth.

¹²⁸ παραδιδωμι "delivered" is used of Jesus' betrayal. However, Romans 8:32 indicates the Father gave Him, and therefore this verb indicates God's delivering Him unto punishment and death in our place.

¹²⁹ The AV and NKJV have "sins" though no Greek text, not even the TR not Majority text support this reading.

hours upon the cross. Becoming a sinful creature (by imputation only) involved God putting our trespasses on Him. Remember, we trespass far more than we sin. Trespasses are likely the chief expression of our sinful natures. Some expositors fail to recognize this significance in the difference between the terms sin and trespass, treating them as virtually synonymous.¹³⁰ Yet in Romans 5, trespass plays a key role in understanding Adam's fall and man's condemnation. In 5:16, many (those from Adam to Abraham) died by one man's trespass. In 5:17 death reigned through the one man's trespass, and in 18 one trespass brought condemnation on all men. In 5:20 we find that the Law was given that the trespass might increase, and this is tied directly to the sin *nature* increasing. The point of this is illustrated in 7:7-8. Paul learned he had a sin *nature* through the Law. The Law told him not to covet [lust], and to this the sin *nature* responded by producing all kinds of coveting (v. 8). Coveting is significant because it is not a sin, but it is a trespass and for Paul, he likely coveted far more than he ever sinned. In this way, Paul saw his sinful nature.

Trespass= in the NT 19x, in Romans-9x | in Romans 5- 6x

Sin= in the NT 150+, in Romans-48x | in Romans 5-6x as a noun, 3x as a verb.

Our justification, or being declared righteousness, is tied to His resurrection, not to His death. This is because His death was the basis upon which God can declare us righteous. His death was the payment which satisfied God's requirement for us to be declared righteous, it was the fine for the crime. Yet, apart from His resurrection, we would not be righteous. He arose, ascended to heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand, with the Father He sent the Spirit. The Spirit then puts us into Him. This could not be done if the Spirit were not sent, or if He were not alive so we might be put into Him. His resurrection is more than God's approval (a common theological pronouncement which lacks exegetical support). His resurrection is necessary to God declaring us righteous. Because of this, Paul could write, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is without outcome; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17).

We have peace facing God through Him (5:1).

The justification accomplished through Christ's death and resurrection provides the believer peace as he faces God. We have seen that justification means God declares the individual to be righteous in Christ. He does this on the basis of Christ's redemption, which paid a sufficient price to secure the believer's freedom. Because of Christ, the believer is freed and cleared of guilt, and God having addressed those, the believer has peace with God.

The peace with God may refer to the believer's standing in Christ, or to his standing before God. Elsewhere, Paul attributed our peace to Christ having taken the Law out of the way, and creating Jew and Gentile into one new man (Ephesians 2:14-15). In fact, Jesus Christ Himself is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). Having accomplished peace, He came (through His apostles) and announced the good news of peace (Ephesians 2:17). Paul does not elaborate on this in Romans, though it is implied that this peace exists in Christ by Paul's words "through

¹³⁰ Morris makes no distinction in the text of his commentary, relegating any recognition of a difference to a footnote. In the footnote, he quotes W. Michaelis writing in the TDNT, summarizing that he "regards it as a synonym of *αμαρτια*..." *op cit.*, p. 215, fn 108.

[ΘΙΩ] our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). This peace is ours now. The main verb “we have” is Present Active Indicative, therefore, it is a present reality. This peace is based upon our being justified, an Aorist Passive Participle. The past act of declaring us righteous has resulted in our present possession of peace in our relationship to God.

We have access through Him because of grace (5:2).

Access to the God of the universe is a great privilege. We do not have this access because of who we are. We have this access through our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1). Some interpreters have taken the noun *prosagogen* [προσαγωγήν] to mean “introduction.” Leon Morris quotes Sanday and Headlam’s commentary on Romans, “The rendering ‘access’ is inadequate, as it leaves out of sight the fact that we do not come in our own strength but need and ‘introducer’ –Christ.”¹³¹ Yet the context states that we have this access “through Whom,” the relative pronoun referring to our Lord Jesus Christ in verse one. Morris’ concern of an ‘introducer’ is answered in the preceding verse. We have already been introduced. The verb “we have” is a Perfect Active Indicative, emphasizing a past act – the introduction, which has continuing results – continued access. We were ushered into the presence of God and continue to have access to Him through our Lord. The object of our access was indicated in verse one, “facing [πρός] God.” In verse two “into the grace in which we stand” can also be “because of the grace in which we stand.” This entails a causative translation of the preposition *eis* [εἰς],¹³² and fits Paul’s statement that we already stand in the grace. It is because we stand in grace that we have this access. Paul related our access to God’s grace in Hebrews 4:16, that we approach with boldness the throne of grace. This translation also fits the context better, for we are not accessing the grace, we are accessing God. Further, we already stand in this grace, where “stand” is another perfect tense verb, “made to stand with the continuing result that we still stand.” Our access to God is through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is avenue through which we come to God in the past, in the present and in the future (cf. John 14:6). In Hebrews, Paul draws on the image of the earthly temple and pictures Christ’s flesh as the veil through which the believer enters the Holy of Holies (10:19-22). Because Jesus sits in His resurrected and glorified humanity at the Father’s right-hand (Hebrews 1:3), and we are seated in Him (Ephesians 2:6), our access to God is simply through our Lord where He is sitting. It is by faith, though these words are omitted in some texts.¹³³ It seems appropriate that Paul include “by faith” as this access is a promise and believers are to place faith in God’s promises to them. Finally, because our whole position in Christ is by God’s grace (Ephesians 1:6), we have access because of the grace in which we stand. That grace in Christ means that we enjoy the benefits of God imputing to us what Jesus Christ is, and because of that, we have access.

Christ died for us while we were still ungodly and sinners (5:6, 8)

Christ did not die for good people. Every believer knows he or she is a sinner, but every believer does appreciate the severity of their previous sinful condition. Some may even think that it took more to save others than it took to save them. Paul intends to level the field at the

¹³¹ Morris, op cit. p. 219.

¹³² see fn 45.

¹³³ It is included in the original hand and the second corrector of \aleph (a fourth century mss), five other manuscripts and the Majority text.

very entrance to salvation by clarifying for whom Christ died.

This statement is a continuation of what Paul began at the end of chapter four and his statement about peace with God in 5:1. We boast in the hope that we will one day be what God intends us to be (v. 2b). We also boast in adversity [tribulation]. We can do this because adversity provides an opportunity to be proved. When we live up under adversity, we get a glimpse of what our future will be like. We get to see the character or reputation [glory] that God intends us to have. The approval then produces in us hope (v. 4), “I responded properly to adversity on this occasion, I have hope that by God’s power I can do it again.” Now, I might fail next time, but that hope doesn’t truly leave me ashamed. God has gushed His love into my heart through the Holy Spirit Who He gave to me” (v. 5). We have already seen that this love is the presence of the Spirit and the Spirit’s continued work.¹³⁴ In large part, Romans 5-8 constitutes Paul’s theme on God’s love gushed forth in our hearts. It closes with two statements in Romans 8 that we cannot be separated from Christ’s love nor from the love God. The intervening section explains both God’s initial work in saving us as well as God’s ongoing work.

To level the field among all believers who make up the Church, Paul reminds us of our similar state at the moment we believed the good news about Jesus Christ (Romans 5:6). First, Christ died for us when we were weak. No one had strength to help or do any part in salvation. Paul does not say Christ died for “us” or “you” but “in place of the ungodly.” “Ungodly” [ασεβης] is a negative adjective from the verb *sebō* [σεβω] which meant to fear or “worship”¹³⁵ a deity. The negative adjective indicated a lack of fear or refusal to worship, we can say it involves dishonoring God rather than honoring God. Therefore, Christ died in the place of those who dishonored God. That’s a blow to anyone who might think he was a sinner, but at least he honored God; he did not! Of the nine occurrences of this adjective, four are in 1&2 Peter and two in Jude, all referring to men exercising their sin natures in opposition to God and His righteousness. Paul then expressed the potential for someone to die in place of a righteous or good man, possible but not likely (Romans 5:7). However, we were neither righteous or good. God presents¹³⁶ His love to us, that Christ died in our place when we were sinners (v. 8).

Unlike many religions, or “Christian” cults, believers know that we were sinners. These verses remind us that we brought nothing to God. We had nothing of value to offer Him. This contributes to our stabilization. A believer who thinks he was lost, but not as lost as another, may face struggles in being stable throughout his Christian life. What happens to the one who really blows it, perhaps finding him or herself doing something far worse than he ever did before salvation? He may question its affect on his standing with respect to God’s love. But if the believer reminds himself of his fully lost state and that God’s love was not conditioned on

¹³⁴ See p. 15.

¹³⁵ Abbott-Smith, op cit, p. 404.

¹³⁶ συνιστημι Present Active Indicative, “present, introduce, (re)commend” F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* rev. Fredrick W. Danker, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) p. 193. See also Mounce, op cit. p. 1283, “to place together, to recommend to favorable attention.”

his performance before salvation, so how could his present actions affect that relationship.¹³⁷

Before we move on, consider how alien God's love seems to man. Couples fall in love because qualities in each other appeal to and elicit the other's love. Couples who choose each other (this is contrasted perhaps to arranged marriages) do not choose to love someone who has nothing appealing whatever: he/she has a grating personality, is a slob/neat-freak, is the most awful looking person I've ever met, no lazier person has walked the earth, etc. We choose a mate because that other person has some qualities which appeal to us. But, because this is the manner in which we fall in love, people fall out of love. Personalities change, looks change, interests change, and those qualities which drew out one's love are gone or altered and that kind of selfish love disappears. We then transfer this model of love to God, and forget that there was nothing valuable or winsome within us that elicited God's love for us. He directed love at us when there was nothing, absolutely nothing worthy of His love. If that is true at the outset, how can it be altered by post-salvation activity. How could we ever cause Him to love us less or to stop loving us. This is precisely what Paul concludes in Romans eight-nothing can separate us from His love.

We will be saved through Him from the wrath (5:9)

Our justification through Christ also assures the believer regarding his future. Romans 5:1 tied justification to our peace facing God. Since we have peace facing God now, we are assured that we will also be saved in the future. God wrath is revealed over all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18). Those who remain hard and resistant to God's kindness treasure up wrath which God will reveal in a day of wrath (2:5). Those who live lives of selfishness (all do) and blur the line which distinguishes the Creator and creature (disobey the Truth), they will receive wrath (2:8). While all these were true of believers prior to salvation, they are no longer true. Believers are now righteous before God by Christ's blood. "By His blood" reminds us that we are righteous by means of Christ's bloody sacrifice of Himself. When God reveals that wrath upon arrogant God-hating humanity, Christ will save His own away from that wrath. The preposition *apō* indicates separation away from someone or something,¹³⁸ in this case from the wrath. "Wrath" has the definite article, meaning specific wrath and not general. The idea of salvation away from wrath is repeated in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 where it is "away from the coming wrath," and 1 Thessalonians 5:9 in which God has not appointed us to wrath. While some interpreters attempt to place this wrath at a final judgment, the full expression of God's wrath is reserved for that time identified as Daniel's 70th week, when God will enter into extended judgment on the earth with Israel and the nations (Revelation 15:1). For believers in this present dispensation, Christ will save us from that wrath. Other Scriptures show that God expresses samples of that coming wrath (Romans 1:18),¹³⁹ and to these believers may be exposed, but we are never the target of God's wrath. We are assured that Christ will save us. This stabilizes us as we look to our future with God.

¹³⁷ This is not say that it has no impact on his experience or enjoyment of his relationship with God **at that moment**, but it does not have to be permanent. He can confess or agree about his sin and go on to enjoy fellowship.

¹³⁸ Dana & Mantey, op cit. p. 101.

¹³⁹ I say that this is a sample because "wrath" is anarthrous, i.e. has no article and emphasizes quality.

We have been reconciled to God through His death (5:10).

As if it were not enough to show God's love by Christ's death for us as the weak, the ungodly, and sinners, Paul adds that we were enemies of God when Christ died for us (v. 10). Christ's death was the channel¹⁴⁰ through which we were reconciled. However we may understand our English word "reconcile," the Greek *katallassō* properly meant "to change, exchange ... hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship."¹⁴¹ The base of this verb is *allassō* from the adjective *allos* which meant "another." "Change" expresses the chief idea. God does not merely sit two opposing individuals at a table and make them sign a peace treaty. God brings about a change. Leon Morris has an extended discussion on whether reconciliation is only man-ward, or whether in some way, God is also reconciled. He concluded, "We maintain, therefore, that there is no good reason for rejecting the conclusion to which the biblical evidence points, namely, that reconciliation includes what we must call a change on the part of God as well as on the part of man, since the wrath of God is no longer directed towards man." However, God will pour out His wrath upon man in the future, and a sample of His wrath remains upon man in the present (Romans 1:18; 2:5; John 3:36). It is not ultimately God who is changed, but that God has affected a change in man. Because God has changed man, God has altered the reason for His wrath. If there is no reason for God to pour out His wrath on an individual, then God ceases His wrath, for that individual, not for all. God has promised us that we are not appointed to wrath, but to specially possess salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Therefore, reconciliation involves God changing us.

Reconciliation is related to our problem of "being enemies." When we were reconciled, we were actively being enemies of God. We may not have recognized that we were God's enemies but we were. We were alienated from God and enemies by our thoughts in the realm of evil works (Colossians 1:21). Even if we did not always do evil works, we thought about them, we passed the ideas of evil works through our minds.¹⁴² Entertaining the prospect of evil works is the means by which we were actively God's enemies. As we saw in Romans 2, people resist the truth that only God is God, and only God can save us. In Colossians 1:21, the thoughts in the realm of evil works probably involved the worship of angels (fallen) and the thought that one could please God by his own personal rigid lifestyle. This is a breach of the distinction between the Creator and creature, a breach which rendered us God's enemies.

Christ accomplished the basis of reconciliation through His death (Romans 5:10). One basis of our hostility toward God and others was the law (Ephesians 2:15-16). The law resulted in hostility toward God because it demonstrated one's failure to be good enough, it resulted in transgression (Romans 4:15). The law resulted in hostility toward others because it distinguished individuals by their law-keeping. This latter distinction was especially true between the Jew and Gentile, because God had given the Law to Israel to make them different (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:1ff; 20:7, 26). Christ rendered the Law idle¹⁴³ and in so doing removed it

¹⁴⁰ Channel or agency is expressed by the preposition *δια* *dia*.

¹⁴¹ Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 236.

¹⁴² The Greek word "thoughts" - *διανοια* meant *δια* - "through" the *νοια* - "mind."

¹⁴³ The AV, ESV, and NASB have "abolish" and the NIV "setting aside." The verb *καταργεω* meant "to make idle or inactive." G. Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 238.

so that He could make peace (Ephesians 2:15). Christ fulfilled the Law and by His death bearing the penalty of the Law, effectively ended the Law as a means for our practical righteousness before God (Romans 10:6). So part of His work of reconciliation involved removing the Law.

Christ was the basis of reconciliation as God did not credit or mark down on record the trespasses of individuals. 2 Corinthians 5:18 states that God reconciled us to Himself. He did this through Christ. Through Christ may refer to Christ's work upon the cross, it more likely refers to who He is now, and how His present place at the Father's right hand grants us access to this God who has reconciled us to Himself. This agrees with Paul's words in Ephesians 2, where after accomplishing reconciliation, Paul moved directly to access to God (v. 18). If the hostility is ended, access can be granted. God applied this reconciliation by means of Christ, by not keeping track of men's trespasses. In Scripture, reconciliation is tied to trespasses not sins. Remember that trespasses outnumber sins because they are the decisions within, many of which we may never do. My translation "keeping track of" translates the *logizomai* which was an accounting term and meant to calculate or to credit.¹⁴⁴ It is also translated by variations of the words impute and reckon. Paul says that God was doing this "in Christ." Translating this "by Christ" clarifies that God made or treated Christ as the means by which He was able to not calculate men's trespasses against them. In Colossians 1:20 and 22, Paul employed a stronger form of the word reconcile. Both verses tie the act of reconciling to Christ's physical death: through the blood of His cross; by the body of His flesh through death. Death involves alienation. Death was imposed as a penalty for man's trespass against God (Romans 5:17).¹⁴⁵ Christ then suffered death on the cross to address these trespasses. This is similar to Paul's statement in (Romans 4:25).

We will be saved by His life (5:10).

The reconciliation which God accomplished through Christ's death, leads us naturally to a benefit of His resurrection or life. In 5:9 we were told that we will be saved from the wrath. It is this salvation to which Paul refers in verse ten. By Christ's life, by that fact that He lives, He will save us. He will come for us, He will gather us to Himself, He will present us blameless before the Father. All this will happen because He lives and He still acts. In verse eleven we find that "we have reconciliation." Because we are in Christ who sits at God's right hand, we are changed and this causes us to be at peace with God. Therefore, He will rescue us from the coming wrath, will snatch us to be with Him, will gather us to Himself before the man of lawlessness will be revealed (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8).¹⁴⁶ Because

¹⁴⁴ Gingrich, op cit. p. 119.

¹⁴⁵ The NASB translates this word "transgression" in Romans 4 & 5. It should not be transgression, for such requires law (cf. Romans 4:15). The Greek word for transgression occurs in 5:14, where the NASB translates it "offense" though Paul was speaking about a transgression for Adam violated a command, "You shall not eat..."

¹⁴⁶ The people of the earth will recognize that the wrath (in the first part of Daniel's 70th week) is coming from the Lamb (Revelation 6:16-17). Yet the first four seals of His wrath involves His removing the Spirit as a restraint upon the world and allowing men to reap the consequences of their unrestrained actions. This is similar to the small displays of God's wrath in the past as explained by Paul in Romans 1, when God "let them go..." on three occasions.

He lives, He is able to save us in the future, as well as in the present.¹⁴⁷ This future hope stabilizes the believer.

He is the means by which God extended to us His grace and the gift by grace (5:15).

5:13-14 illustrate that men are still spiritual dead (death reigned) even though they were not under the Mosaic Law. These two verses involved the people who lived from the time of Adam to the time of Moses when the Law was given. Notice in verse 13 that Paul said “until the Law” meaning that the Law was not then in existence. Paul describes these people as “the many” (vv. 15-16). The people during that time did not nor could not sin like Adam sinned, they could not transgress because they had no rule. Adam had a rule, “do not eat” and by eating, Adam transgressed that simple law. Therefore, these people were spiritual dead because of Adam’s trespass (v. 15). His trespass involved his mental decision to eat before he actually ate.¹⁴⁸ The many died by Adam’s trespass. This is established only here in Romans five.

It is necessary to examine “trespass” [παραπατωμα] for a moment. This noun occurs in 19 times in the New Testament, the verb but twice. The word occurs three times in Matthew and Mark, nine times in Romans, once each in 2 Corinthians and Galatians, three times in Ephesians and twice in Colossians. The preponderance of occurrences in Romans demonstrate its significance to Paul’s purpose. The occurrences in the Gospels addressed individuals forgiving others their trespasses done against them (Matthew 6:14, 15; Mark 11:25). In 2 Corinthians God did not tally up against the world their trespasses. Galatians 6:1 encouraged spiritual believers to restore a brother involved in a trespass, which Paul most likely described the last verse of chapter five. The believer’s trespasses are forgiven in Christ (Ephesians 1:7); and they were part of the cause of his/her spiritual death (2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13). How do sin and trespasses differ? A sin is an act of lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness does not specifically mean a violation of the Law, that is the Mosaic Law, but rather to live as though God has no restrictions. Lawlessness is to live a life which does not regard any restrictions. In 1

¹⁴⁷ I was asked a question at this point regarding reconciliation in Colossians 1 “all things,” that if reconciliation has been accomplished, why will God still judge these people and pour out His wrath upon them during Daniel’s 70th week? First, we need to distinguish between provision and application. Christ’s death provided redemption, reconciliation and propitiation for all men (1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:1; Colossians 1:20). I find many attempt to minimize the “all things” of Colossians 1:20 to non-rational creatures and creation, so as not to suggest any type of reconciliation for fallen spirit beings, though that is the natural direction of the text. Yet the problem is answered simply by realizing that though it has been provided for all, not all have it applied to them, see 2 Corinthians 5:15, “He died for all, that those who live” where the first group is larger than the second. Second, Christ’s provision for all means that God will not judge men based upon those matters, but upon their lack of faith in Him. Even before this present dispensation, men had to believe in God, though not Christ in particular, and most of humanity rejected this, replacing God with their own gods (cf. Romans 1). So, in the present, when the Spirit proves to men their need of salvation, they are first confronted with their sin of not believing in Christ. He does not prove to them their miscellaneous and perhaps heinous sins, but only that of unbelief in Christ. Christ likewise indicated that He would judge men with the simple word, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23), this despite the fact that they have engaged in many religious activities (v. 22). He also reveals that at the Great White Throne, men’s eternal destiny is not decided by their works but by whether their name is written in the book of life (Revelation 20:15), the books of their works then serve the function of demonstrating their failure to have done anything genuinely good or righteous. Therefore, Christ has made provision for all, but God has also promised both judgment and wrath (anger) upon men for their persistent opposition to God and for their refusal to properly acknowledge Him as absolute Creator and the only One worthy to be feared (cf. Revelation 14:6-7). They persist in violating the Creator-creature distinction.

¹⁴⁸ This is true of any trespass and sin. One always trespasses before sinning, because one always decides to act before one acts, and sometimes is stopped from acting after deciding to do so, and therefore never sins.

John the boundaries for our life involves “abiding in Him (Christ)” (1 John 2:27ff). It involves being a child of God, focusing on the hope of Christ’s coming and our becoming like Him so that we purify ourselves as He is pure (1 John 3:1-3). To be lawless is to disregard this way of life and live like I want to live. This is well supported by Paul’s use of the word trespass in Romans 5:15, 16, 17, 19, 20. The many, those from Adam to Moses, were not under a law, and yet they trespassed. They were not sinning because they had specific restrictions for their behavior (if they did, God has not revealed such restrictions in His Word). They did offend or trespass against God. They fell alongside that which God desired for them. If you recall that Romans one describes three times in history when men refused to treat God as God and rather strained to worship something other than God, one has a sense of the kinds of trespasses men were committing. They had no law, but they knew the Creator existed and that the creature was not the Creator, but they violated this distinction and this was a trespass. In the LXX it often translates **ἔμελλε** which meant to break or trust or to be unfaithful in a matter. This would agree with the New Testament idea that one fails to live up to what he or she knows God to be

God addressed this state of death, the spiritual separation from Him (cf Ephesians 4:18). He addressed it by His grace (v. 15). Grace is an expression of God’s attitudes of love and goodness in which He provides or acts on behalf of one without regard to whether the other has done anything deserving of that benefit (cp Romans 11:6). This was a new concept in grace which Jesus Christ began by His activity, but was not explained until Paul (cf John 1:17; Ephesians 3:2). God also provided a gift by grace (5:15). Paul refers to this gift again in verse 16 and in 17 explains that it is the gift consisting of righteousness. Christ has become righteousness for us (1 Corinthians 1:30). God has made the believer to become His kind of righteousness in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). The point is that the gift of grace by Christ is first our trespasses to Him followed by God’s righteousness to us in Christ. He is our righteousness! It wasn’t measured or limited but it abounded, it overflowed.

Christ had to deal with not only Adam’s one trespass but the many trespasses which have resulted from Adam’s trespass (v. 16). The spiritual death reigned by Adam’s trespass (v. 17). Because of Christ, they will reign [Fut. Act. Ind.]. We have received the abundance or overflow of grace and the overflow consisting of the gift of righteousness, however Paul is still looking at the many, those from Adam to Moses. They will reign. They have a future, as do we. They are not lost to the past, but they will sit on the New Jerusalem, the spirits of righteous men brought to their maturity or completion (Hebrews 12:23). By the life of Christ, they too are rescued and promised a grand future, similar yet distinct from ours (we too sit on the New Jerusalem-*contra* Israel who will be upon the earth). For us the significance is that Christ had to deal not only with our sins but also with our trespasses and that is demonstrated by His addressing the trespasses of those who lived at one time without the Law, again this is similar to but not identical to us. We are not under Law, though the Law has been given and Grace believers often attempt to live by that Law, the many didn’t even have Law, and so could not attempt to live by it. This provides stability.

Grace reigns through Him because of (causal *eiß*, 5:21).

Paul’s use of the many from Adam to Moses continues through Romans 5:19. He

concludes that many are declared righteous by the one Man's (Jesus Christ) obedience. He obeyed in going to the cross, in being raised and in sitting at the Father's right hand. Combined that activity is the basis of justification.

In Romans 5:20 Paul turns to the Law and its purpose. After the period from Adam to Moses, the Law entered. It entered for the purpose of making the trespass increase. Again, trespass is the mental revolt against God which always precedes sin, and often happens even when one never acts. In 7:13 Paul pointed out that the Law was given so that the sin *nature* would become excessively sinful. When the sin *nature* is confronted with regulations, etc. it focuses upon them, becomes obsessed with them, and the mindset of the individual is on his flesh and the do's and don'ts. Morris comments, "It (the law) gives them something to sin against and in this way is an ally of sin."¹⁴⁹ (clarification mine). The sin *nature* then becomes more apparent because it is constantly focusing on these things which the individual knows he or she should not do. Paul used his personal experience with "coveting" or "lusting/craving" (Romans 7:7-8). It was a simple command, but the sin nature took advantage of that command and produced every kind of craving in him. that craving or coveting was not acts of sin, but they were trespasses. They went beyond the boundary God had set and therefore were contrary to God's will for Paul. It was by this problem that Paul learned he had a sinful nature. So in 5:20 law (any kind) brought about the increase or multiplication of the trespass. Even if individuals didn't break laws and thereby sin and transgress, they thought about it and therefore, trespassed.

The multiplied trespass involved the increase of the sin *nature* (Romans 5:20). One trespasses against God because he or she has a sin nature which is bent against the will of God, either by blatant contradiction of God's revealed will or by trying to take God's place in accomplishing God's revealed will (deviation from the Creator-creature distinction). For any who had lived under the Law, a trespass or act of unfaithfulness brought judgment. However, for New Testament Grace believers, when the sin nature increases, the grace hyper-increases. In modern terms: when the sin nature goes into drive, the sin nature goes into overdrive.¹⁵⁰ Paul explained how the grace went in to overdrive in verse 21, the sin nature had reigned by the spiritual death, so now the grace can reign¹⁵¹ through righteousness because of¹⁵² eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Grace reigns by something it accomplishes, not in some ethereal sense. Grace accomplishes righteousness, which probably refers to practical righteousness. The noun "righteousness" [δικαιοσύνη] is anarthrous and does refer to our positional righteousness in Christ but to our righteousness in living. In 6:13 our members are to be presented to God as tools or weapons of righteousness, that is, tools for accomplishing a righteous act. The same idea is communicated in 6:16, 18, and 19.¹⁵³ We are capable of righteousness because we have eternal life. We have been animated by God's kind of life,

¹⁴⁹ Morris, op cit. p. 280.

¹⁵⁰ "Hyper abounded" or in "overdrive" (my paraphrase) is similar to the situation in which God swore and oath, although God needs to swear no oath because His word is true and faithful. So, here this is stated for the impact.

¹⁵¹ Aorist Active Subjunctive - possibility.

¹⁵² A causal εις.

¹⁵³ Verses 18 and 19 have articles of previous reference.

animated to accomplish God's righteous purposes through us. We are incapable of this kind of righteousness apart from this life, because we cannot accomplish them apart from God. This eternal life and the righteousness are through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have life because the Son dwells in us (1 John 5:11-12). In this passage "through Jesus ..." emphasizes not the life simply being in us, but as a channel or avenue through which something can be accomplished. He has not given us eternal life as fire insurance against judgment and Hell, but as the means of living a life to the glory of God. We can live to God's glory only because Christ lives in us. We can live this way despite the sin nature because God's grace goes into overdrive in us. The potential to let grace reign and accomplish righteous purposes in us through Jesus Christ our Lord provides us with stability.

He is the sphere into which the believer has been placed Romans 6

We were baptized, or placed into Christ, into His death, burial, and connected with His resurrection (6:3-5). Paul brought this fact to the reader's attention in answer to the question of 6:1 which arose in response to Paul's statement in 5:20-21, that God's grace goes into overdrive when our sin nature goes into drive. Paul anticipated the response to the grace in overdrive, that perhaps operating in the sin nature more would be best, getting even more grace. Paul pointed out the inconsistency with our identity in Christ. The Spirit placed us into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Being put into Christ we were put into His death and burial (vv. 3-4). If we died with Christ to the sin nature, it makes no sense to operate in that sin nature, even if it is to get more grace. We are also tied to His resurrection. We died to the sin *nature* in close union (sun) with Christ (6:8). The "old man" is not the sin nature, but the old "me" or "us" in Adam when we were under the dominion of the sin nature. Since He rose from the dead, death has no authority (lit. can not lord over, kurieu/w) over Him (6:9). Jesus Christ died (while physically alive on the cross)¹⁵⁴ to the sin *nature*, but now lives to God (6:10). For the final three hours of Christ's time upon the cross, He was separated from the Father as He was counted to be sin in our place. Because we have been united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection it is logical to count one's self to be a dead one to the sin *nature* and a living one to God, and this is true of him in Christ (6:11). Even when we are operating in our sin nature, our identity in Christ is unchanged. We are counted to have already paid for those sins in Christ. Our union with Christ in these areas makes for stability.

In Christ Jesus God extends to the believer His gracious gift of eternal life (6:23).

Every believer in this present age has eternal life from the moment he or she believed the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. The believer has eternal life because the Son indwells him or her (1 John 5:11-12). This is actual union with God the Son in the realm of the omnipresent **divine** nature. At the same time, the believer is placed into Christ. "In Christ" is imputed or credited union of the believer and Christ. "In Christ" relates the believer to Christ's **humanity**: His status, His seated position, His past work on the cross. The Son indwelling and being in Christ are distinction relationships.

154 "The sin here does not refer to acts of sin. ...Here he speaks of the relation of Christ's death to the sinful nature of the individual. *Our Lord's death not only paid the penalty of human sin, but it was used of God to break the power of indwelling sin in the believer's life.*" Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955) p. 104. William R. Newel distinguished this passage from Paul's words in chapter three. "Christ is seen dying *to* sin, not *for* it, here" He then correctly ties it to 2 Corinthians 5:21. *Romans Verse by Verse*, (Chicago: Grace Publications, 1943) p. 221.

So, why does Paul appear to say that we have eternal life “in Christ Jesus our Lord?” Is He confusing the two relationships? No, he knows the distinction, but is considering not the possession of eternal life but its use or outworking. Part of the problem in properly understanding Romans 6:23 is that many of us do and have used the verse in evangelism, explaining to people that God’s gift is eternal life. Yet, Romans 6:23 –like the rest of the book– is not written to the unsaved or for the unsaved. Paul wrote Romans to the Romans saints. The verse is not about how an unsaved person who does not have eternal life can get eternal life. The verse is about how one who already possesses eternal life can live out that life. He must operate in his or her position in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore, the preposition *en* may be used in two ways. Paul may have meant that the life is in Christ, and by having Christ in us, we share in that life. If Paul is using “in Christ Jesus our Lord” with the common idea of our position, then he is contrasting the believer operating in his sin nature versus the believer operating in Christ Jesus our Lord and experiencing God’s gracious benefit. Eternal life can only be experienced as the believer sets his frame of mind to his position in Christ. This is essential what Christ meant when He spoke about the Vine and branches in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who is abiding in Me and I in him, this one bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” In the preceding context, Paul has been contrasting this way of life to that of continuing or abiding in the sin nature (Romans 6:1). The sin nature pays out a pittance wage to those who operate in the sin nature – death (6:23). If the believer continues to abide or operate in his sin nature, he is operating in the sphere where he has not yet been regenerated, that is in a sphere of death. Not only is that death, but one who lives by the sin nature is “about to die” (8:13). Rather than relate to death, Paul encouraged the Romans saints, “but now being freed from the sin *nature* and being a slave to God, you have fruit because you’ve been set apart, now the end of this is eternal life” (6:22). Paul didn’t mean that if the believer lives well, he will be rewarded with eternal life, but rather that eternal life is lived out. The believer gets to use that which he possesses, or as he said in 5:21 “the grace reigns through righteousness because of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Notice the same language in 5:21 and 6:23. Both verses are saying nothing about how people get eternal life, but that through our Lord Jesus Christ and In our Lord Jesus Christ, we can live out eternal life as a present reality, and that provides the believer further stability.

The believer died to the Law through the body of Christ (7:4).

Living by the Mosaic Law or law in general does not result in stability. In Hebrews, Paul stated that the Law made nothing mature (7:19). As Paul has been encouraging the Roman saints to live by grace and to live free of their sin nature, he must point out the problem of the Law in accomplishing this and demonstrate that God has freed believers from the Law. Paul illustrated this by reference to the Law (7:1). Under the Law, a woman was bound to her husband as long as her husband lived (vv. 2-3). However, if her husband died, she was free to marry another (v. 3). In Paul’s illustration, the husband is the Law, and the wife is the believer. Paul established in chapter six that the believer died with Christ, by being placed into Christ

(6:3, 8). Therefore the believer is not freed as the wife was, that is by her husband dying. The believer is freed from the Law by dying to the Law (v. 4). When the believer was placed into the body of Christ, he or she was placed into Christ's death. We not only died to the sin nature, but also to the Law. This allows the believer not only to be alive to God, but to bear fruit by¹⁵⁵ the God. This freedom from the Law by union with Christ adds another element of stability for the believer.

There is no condemnation for the one in Christ Jesus (8:1).

In chapter five, Paul introduced the problem of condemnation (5:16, 18). Adam was only one man, yet he brought condemnation to everyone (5:16). That condemnation resulted from Adam's trespass (5:18). Therefore, condemnation resulted not from Adam's sin which brought death, but from his choice, his decision to disobey God and his resulting sin nature. Therefore, upon entering the world, we are in a condemned state due to our sin nature. Chapter seven traced out the ongoing problem of the sin nature and how the law served to make the sin nature plainly visible. That experience left Paul desperately exasperated (7:24). He wanted deliverance. This was not the cry of an unsaved man, but of a believer who knows what real life is, but finds himself frustrated to live out that real life.

Romans 8:1 provides the assuring response, no condemnation exists. This is not because we learn to be better. It doesn't exist for those who are in Christ Jesus. As we have seen, those who are in Christ Jesus have died to the sin nature, have been buried and are raised with Christ and made alive to God (see above notes on Romans 6). Therefore, by this relationship, the believer has participated with Christ in dying for his sins and dying to that sin nature. Because of this the condemnation is past, there is no basis for the believer to be condemned because Christ bore that condemnation and by the believer's union, the believer is counted by God to have participated in that with Christ. Make no mistake, Christ literally suffered and bore the penalty, the believer is only counted or credited by God to have shared in that. This would have been a real learning curve for Paul who had lived all his pre-salvation life under law. In that environment, Paul would have lived with the fear of condemnation for his personal sin and failures. That was all changed in Christ. Since the believer has shared in that, the believer is free of condemnation and is a further basis of stability.

Liberty in Christ Jesus (8:2)

Paul's frustration over his sin nature was relieved by the fact that he is now free of condemnation, but Paul is not left to struggle with his sin nature in absolute failure. In the last chapters, Paul has used the word "law" with several references: Mosaic law, principle of the sin nature, principle of God, principle of death, principle of Paul's mind. In 8:2 Paul references the law or principle which involves the Spirit tied to life in Christ Jesus. That principle simply explains how the Spirit frees the believer in practice from the dominion of his sin nature. The Spirit does this by leading or directing the believer to mentally relate to his life in Christ (vv. 2-5). The Mosaic Law was weak, because it was unable to motivate most people past the intense cravings of their own flesh (v. 3). God was able to do what the Law could not do. God

¹⁵⁵ While some translations have "for" God, the idea is that God can produce this fruit through the believer.

condemned the sin nature which exists in the flesh by sending His Son. As we have seen, the Son bore the penalty, not only for acts of sin but for the sinful nature itself. In this way, as we have seen, God addressed the condemnation but also provided a means of freedom from the sin nature's domination of the individual. This is provided by Christ and by the believer being in Christ, but it is worked out by the present ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In 8:4-5 Paul described “walking by the Spirit” versus “walking by the flesh.” Walking is a metaphor for a mental activity described by the Greek word family *phroneo* [φρονεω] (v. 5). This word family described a fence. It was used of the body's diaphragm which was a fence between the upper organs and the lower organs. The word is most frequently used of a mental fence, or a mental restricting of one's thinking. In this way, part of this word family described an individual who is prudent because that individual is able to restrict his or her thinking to key facts which have bearing on the individual's situation. Walking by either the Spirit or flesh is not an ethereal or mysterious matter. It involves the individual following the Spirit's lead. Paul wrote about walking by the Spirit in Romans 8 and Galatians 5. In both texts, Paul also referred to the Spirit's leading the individual (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18). Galatians 5:18 also adds that one who is led by the Spirit, implying that he or she is following that lead, is not under law, a point which fits well in Paul's discussion of the law's weakness (8:3). Newell comments, “Walking by the Spirit has now taken the place of walking by ordinance.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, to walk by the Spirit requires two responses from the believer. First, the individual follows the Spirit's lead. The Spirit is leading the individual to direct his or her thinking to certain truths. Second, once the believer has directed his attention to the specific truths to which the Spirit has led him, he then restricts his thinking to those truths. This is walking by the Spirit, mentally following Him to truth and then thinking upon that truth.

The Spirit does not lead to just any truth or set of truths. The Spirit lead specifically to truths about the believer's life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). Paul laid out these basic truths in chapter six. Now we find that in order for the Spirit to free the individual believer, the Spirit directs or leads the believer to restrict his or her thinking to who he or she is in Christ. When this happens the Spirit is able to affect freedom for that time. Paul never states that this is a permanent freedom. It exists as long as the believer's mind is fixed upon his God-reckoned position in Christ. The Spirit affects freedom, and the experience of that freedom results in greater stability for the believer, for he or she finds that God is still working in us.

Christ is in the believer (8:10). In Romans 8:2-11, Paul explained how to put the truths of Romans 6 into practice so that the believer can experience freedom from sin and can have live out practical righteousness. The Holy Spirit leads the believer to frame his mind or set his frame of mind.¹⁵⁷ Here, Paul does not elaborate on the what constitutes this frame of mind, he explained that in 6:11. Romans 8 shows that the Spirit is leading the believer to use that reality of his position to frame his mind. Paul warns that the frame of mind from the flesh is death

¹⁵⁶ Newell, op cit. p. 393.

¹⁵⁷ This is the meaning of the verb φρονεω “to fence in” and the noun φρονημα “that which has been fenced in.” Both words began in a broader sense, even referring to the physical diaphragm which fenced off the upper organs from the abdomen. In New Testament times this word family had been applied to a mental fence, a frame of mind.

(8:6) while the frame of mind from the Spirit is life and peace. Death is likely twofold: the believer is operating in the sphere of spiritual death, and the outcome may be physical death as chastening. The reason is that the frame of mind from the flesh is hostile towards God, refusing to submit to God or to God's law (perhaps the principle by which God works or the Law; 8:7). As a result the believer who is operating in his or her flesh is not able to please God. The flesh may appear appealing for getting things done for God, but nothing done by the flesh is appealing (cf Galatians 3:2-3).

Christ indwells the believer (1 John 5:11-12; Colossians 1:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5). He shares eternal life with the believer by His indwelling. Yet that life cannot be lived out because of the sin nature. It gets in the way. We do not automatically live like children of God with God's kind of life. In light of this problem, Paul noted the problem and the solution: the body is dead because of sin, so you cannot rely upon it; the Spirit is life because of righteousness, so we must follow the Spirit's lead as we saw above, not the lead of the flesh. When we follow the Spirit's lead, because the Spirit indwells us (v. 11), He will make our mortal bodies alive. Mortal emphasizes a state in which it is subject to death, we could die at any moment. Paul is not speaking of the resurrection, for that would reverse mortality. This is making alive what is mortal. Paul means that Christ, our life, can be lived out through the work of the Spirit. He takes the life and manifests it as the fruit from the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Further, when we follow the Spirit's lead, we are visibly sons of God (v. 14). The Spirit doesn't lead us back to slavery and fear, which would exist if we were attempting to live under law and trying to bring the sin nature into submission by resorting law. The Spirit causes us to cry out Daddy, Father, something which a slave never did. This is further due to the fact that Christ is being lived out through the Spirit's work. So, we follow the Spirit's lead. The Spirit causes our mortal bodies to visibly demonstrate Christ and His life. We in liberty cry out to our Daddy Father, as liberated sons. Living this out by the work of the Spirit because Christ is in us stabilizes the believer

We are joint-heirs with Christ (8:17).

Just as the Spirit emphasizes that we are sons, by leading us to our position in Christ, rather than to the Law, so the Spirit bears a witness to our spirit (as opposed to soul and body) that we are God's children. (This does not mean we are gods, or little gods, or will become gods, but that God has altered our nature to reflect some of His nature. We cannot blur the Creator-Creature distinction, that was the horrible error Paul explained in Romans 1). John stated that we are God's children because we were born from God (1 John 5:1-2). Jesus said we are born from the Spirit (John 3:3, 5), for though the birth is from the Father, the Spirit enacts it. This is similar to the Spirit causing the physical conception of Jesus' humanity within Mary, yet Jesus was Son to the Father. John stated that though we are the children of God, it is not plain what we will be (1 John 3:1-2). We cannot look at ourselves and plainly see that we God's children in the present. However, a time is coming when we will see Christ and we will be changed, and we will be plainly visible as God's children. In the interim, the Spirit has to work in conjunction with our human spirit to let us know that we God's children. Our soul cannot sense that we His children. Our body does not look as though we are His children. Our spirit is the part which was born from above (John 3:6), and it is the part that is able to grasp the fact that we are now God's children.

Because we are God's children, we are heirs. God has something for us to inherit. Similarly, Paul ties our being heirs to our being sons (Galatians 4:7). We will inherit the kingdom of God in its future form (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 15:50; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5). In each of the preceding texts, Paul revealed what does not inherit the kingdom of God: those who practice the works of the flesh. Believers certainly do works of the flesh, but do not practice them. God does not allow the believer to practice such works, as He chastens us, so that we are not condemned along with the world (1 Corinthians 11:30-31). In this way, God assures that those He has made heirs will be fit to be heirs. We will inherit incorruptibility. Among Israel, the meek inherit the earth (Matthew 5:17), while Christ is heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2) and since we are joint-heirs with Him, we too inherit all things. Not only do we inherit all things with Christ, but we also are made Christ's inheritance (Ephesians 1:11). The Spirit serves as the downpayment on our inheritance, guaranteeing that we will get all God has promised to us. So in 4:28, the Spirit seals us until our bodies are completely redeemed. Not only are we joint heirs with Christ, but Christians from Jewish and Gentiles backgrounds are equal heirs, no group receiving the lion's share of the inheritance (Ephesians 3:6). The Father has planned our salvation so that we will be fit or sufficient to be an heir among the other saints (Colossians 1:12). Believers have become heirs by the standard of eternal life (Titus 3:7). This ties to the hope of living a God-honoring life based upon possessing eternal life (Titus 1:1-2).

In Revelation 21:7 those who are overcomers -victors, are God's sons. The inheritance is inheriting the kingdom with Christ, and being a joint heir with Christ. We presently exist in humble bodies (NIV - lowly; Philippians 3:21). Our bodies are low and limited. When Christ comes for us, He will transfigure this present body so that it is like His body of glory. According to 1 John 3:2, that happens when we see Jesus as He is. By changing our body followed immediately by our soul being saved (1 Peter 1:9), our entire being, our spirit, soul and body will be holy and we will be fully conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). When we are conformed, Jesus Christ is the firstborn or the preeminent heir among many brothers. We are not brothers in the sense of deity, but in the sphere of our humanity to His humanity. As glorified humans, we will share in His inheritance. This stabilizes the believer to think that we will share this future with Him.

Christ Jesus died, is raised, is at God's right hand, and intercedes for us (8:34).

By this short list Paul pointed out both Christ's past and present work on behalf of the believer. We might paraphrase Paul's question: If Christ did and does all this for you, why would He then condemn you? This list also reminds us that we are not only secure because of what Christ **did** but also because of what Christ **does**-He intercedes. For many Christians, our prayer life is like firing a shotgun, or throwing a whole handful of small stones which scatters broadly in hope of hitting something. When Christ communicates on our behalf, He intercedes. The Greek verb is **εντυγχανω** [*entungchano*] from the verb **τυγχανω** [*tungchano*] meaning "1. to hit ... 2. to hit upon, to light upon."¹⁵⁸ The difference between His communication and that of

¹⁵⁸ Abbott-Smith, p. 452.

the average believer is that Christ is specific and hits right at what we need. We don't always know what need, and we sometimes ask for what we don't need or for what is of no value, perhaps even detrimental. Christ always hits the right bullseye. Christ's intercedes so that we become mature (Hebrews 7:25). The NASB has translated the noun *παντελες* [*panteles*] "forever" and the ESV "uttermost" and the NIV "completely." The base of the *panteles* refers to an end, a goal, or a purpose. God intends for believer to mature. Final maturity (as we saw in the last section) will happen when Christ returns for His Church. Until then, maturity takes place incrementally as believers face spiritual challenges and learn to rely upon God to address those challenges. In face those challenges, Jesus Christ specifically targets needs in individual believers' lives so that each one can mature. Knowing that our Savior is asking specifically for our needs stabilizes believers.

What are some possible areas of His intercession? Hebrews 2:18 states that He is able to answer the call for help from those who are being tempted. He answers that call with intercession. Again in Hebrews 4:14-15 Jesus the Son of God acts as our High Priest having been tempted in areas similar to the believer. This encourages believers to approach the throne of grace when tempted to receive mercy and find grace in response to our cry for help (same word as in 2:18. Romans 8:35 may hint at some areas of His intercession, as nothing in the list can separate us from Christ's love for us. "Tribulation" or adverse pressure cannot separate us, but rather such pressure produces in us patience leading to character (5:2-6). Such character involves conformity to the image of the Son and fits that for which our Lord might intercede. "Distress" or tightness. If tribulation is pressure from above, *stenochoria* is pressure from the side, a tight place. Paul used this word four times, three times with tribulation and twice with persecution. Therefore, what is said of tribulation can similarly be said of distress. "Persecution" is promised to all who wish to live godly (2 Timothy 3:12). Yet in persecution as an anointed one, the believer can rejoice and be happy (1 Peter 4:13-16). Regarding famine and nakedness, Paul stated that he had learned to be content in whatever condition he found himself (Philippians 4:11-13). Paul used "peril" only here and in 2 Corinthians 11:26 in which he used it eight times of the various perils he had experienced. Paul connected the sword to the arm of government (Romans 13:4). Though Paul instructed believers to obey government, he also recognized it as a potential peril to believers. Human government is part of the world system and the believer is not part of the world system. These are only suggestions for areas in which Jesus might intercede. They are suggestions because for intercession to hit the bullseye, Jesus intercedes for specifics for each individual. Those specifics may fall into the above categories but may include many other areas mentioned throughout the New Testament. His intercession stabilizes believers.

God loves the believer in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:39).

Paul began his discussion about God's love in 5:5. Hope does not leave us ashamed because God's love has been gushed into our heart. Beginning in 5:12 and continuing to the present verse in chapter eight, Paul has been demonstrating that even the existence of and our activity in the sin *nature*, cannot separate us from God's love. His references to "in Christ Jesus" involve our God-given position or standing. Paul used this expression 47 times. God has declared us righteous through redemption which is in Christ Jesus (3:24). It is only as we

operate in Christ that we enjoy eternal life (6:23). We are free of condemnation because we are in Christ (8:1). The Spirit works on the principle of life in Christ Jesus to free us from the principle of the sin nature and death (8:2). Outside of Romans, Paul adds that we are set apart (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30). We have freedom in Christ (Galatians 2:4). God counts the believer to have shared in Christ's death, burial and resurrection (6:11). He counts each to be in Christ, and free of condemnation in Christ. However, this is only true in Christ. On earth in the present body, the believer still struggles with his sin nature. The flesh still craves that which is contrary to God's will. Paul demonstrated that God has dealt with every aspect of the sin nature and the sin nature conflict. Because God's provision for the believer is based upon who Christ is and based upon God's grace, the believer can't be separated from this position in Christ.

Grace is an aspect of God's eternal attribute of love. Therefore, when God graces the believer in Christ (cf Ephesians 1:6 where grace occurs as a verb), God is extending His love to the believer. Paul concludes that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus (8:39). "In Christ Jesus" is the location of our position. Nothing can cause God to stop counting the believer to be in Christ Jesus. Nothing can cause God to stop blessings us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). That causes stability, you can't lose your position in Christ.

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for the one believing (10:4).

Early in Romans, Paul stated that God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith (1:17). From faith to faith refers to righteousness from an initial act of faith to righteousness daily by faith. Today, one believes the gospel and is ushered into a continued life by faith. Under the Mosaic Law, one went from an act of faith in God's promise to a life by the law. The word "righteousness" in 1:17 is anarthrous (without the article) and therefore emphasizes a quality of righteousness. This is not the only manner in which God's kind of righteousness has been made visible, but it the righteousness which we see in the present. Paul again referred to this in 3:21, that God's kind of righteousness has been made visible¹⁵⁹ apart from law. By fulfilling the requirement of being a perfect sacrifice, Christ provided for our salvation. However, the issue at stake is not initial justification but of life by law.¹⁶⁰ No one was ever justified by Law, and this Paul demonstrated by the example of David who lived under the Law (Romans 4:6-8). However, Israelis were righteous in daily conduct by obedience to the Law, and Paul focused on this daily living. William Newell recognized the struggle to interpret this due to Reformed theology's attempt to keep Gentiles under law "if not as a means of righteousness, then as 'a rule of life,' that all the trouble has arisen. *The Law is no more a rule of life than it is a means of righteousness.*"¹⁶¹ We are not under law but under grace and we have been freed from the Law by dying with Christ (6:14; 7:6-7). Paul played upon the language of Deuteronomy 30:12-14. As Moses died, Israel had God's word, it was in their mouth and they didn't need to seek another to bring down more or to raise one up (Moses?) for more. Paul

¹⁵⁹ A perfect tense of φανερωω.

¹⁶⁰ F.F. Bruce, op cit. refers his interpretation of this passage back to his earlier discussion of initial justification. pp. 202, 56. With this view Morris agrees. op cit, p. 380.

¹⁶¹ Newell, op cit. p. 393.

altered Moses' language to apply it to the person of Jesus Christ. Life by law is Paul's point. Israel could never see this and attempted to do what did not need to be done (10:6-7). No one could ascend to bring Christ down from heaven, He had already come, and to attempt to do so would be foolish. Neither could anyone descend into the abyss to bring Him up from the dead, for He was already raised. Paul's comparison is that to not live by law is to attempt to do what only God has done and can do. We have seen that freedom from the law, or in this present text, ending the law, also ties to being free from the sin nature (7:4-6). The strength of the sin nature is the law (1 Corinthians 15:56). As we have seen, the law provided a challenge to demonstrate the sinfulness of sin (7:11-13). But Christ has ended law as a means of righteousness. Knowing that Christ ended the Law as a means of righteousness for us stabilizes us, as righteousness by law is uncertain and therefore unstable for it depends upon us.

Jesus is Deity (Lord, 10:9, 10).

As Paul played on Moses' words from Deuteronomy 30:12-14, he concluded that it is the word that he proclaimed (10:8). He proclaimed the need to agree (confess)¹⁶² that Jesus is deity or Lord and believe that God raised Him from among dead ones (v. 9). This was initial salvation. A refusal to acknowledge Christ's deity or believe in His resurrection draws the line between the believer and unbeliever. Struggling to achieve personal righteousness by law often results from a failure to appreciate that Jesus is truly and fully God. Appreciating His deity reminds us that when He healed the lame man on the Sabbath, "My Father works up to right now and I work up to right now" (John 5:17). As deity He is able to end the very law which He first gave to Moses. He is also able to establish a different standard for righteousness. For the 1500 years in which the Mosaic Law was in force, daily righteousness and its accompanying privilege of approaching God at the temple was by the Law, but Jesus has ended that. Being God gives Him the right to do so. Romans 9-11 addresses the Jewish question: what about the Jews? When Christ walked the earth, the object of faith was that Jesus is God and He is bringing the kingdom. The first part of the promise remains: Jesus is God. Whether Jew or Gentile, it is still necessary to believe that Jesus is God. Anyone less than God would be unable to save us. God purchased us with His own blood (Acts 20:28). That our Savior is also our God stabilizes us.

The believers are one body in Christ (12:5).

An inflated opinion of one's self does not promote stability. When the believer fails to live up to his or her opinion, it brings tremendous guilt and potentially instability. Having addressed the matter that Israel has not been separated from God's love in Romans 9-11, Paul turns to some practical encouragements which will help produce stability. He encouraged the Romans saints to present themselves to God as living sacrifices (12:1). Once presented, He then encouraged them to not be conformed to this age, but to be transformed, to be changed so that one's outward life agrees with his inner life. So W.E. Vine writes, "While the word *schēma* (see the verb in the preceding clause) stresses what is outward, the word *morphē* lays stress upon that which is essential and inward, and which find expression in outward manifestation. Both words represent what is real and not merely apparent, the difference being in the prominence

¹⁶² The translation "confess" involves much religious "baggage" and "agree" which is literal may be better.

given to what is outward and inward respectively.”¹⁶³ The means of stopping one’s being conformed and going on to be transformed is “the renewed mind” (12:2). Most writers take this noun to be an action which we do. Such writers implore the believer to renew his mind and then precede to explain how to renew one’s mind. However, Paul wrote that we have Christ’s kind¹⁶⁴ of mind (1 Corinthians 2:16). He told the Ephesians to be renewed by the spirit of their mind (Ephesians 4:23). One can’t be renewed by something which itself is not renewed, and the mind of Christ has no need of renewal. Therefore, the believer mind is already renewed and, “This ongoing process of transformation flows from the inner being, the renewed mind (v. 2b).”¹⁶⁵ It appears these writers understood this renewal to be complete. The renewed mind has the ability to adjust the believer’s opinion of him or herself.

The first application of that renewed mind and the first use of the living sacrifice is service within the body of Christ. Paul appealed to the Romans to not think of themselves above what is necessary for them to think (Romans 12:3). “To think more highly” [NASB] involves the idea of setting one’s attitude or frame of mind on something.¹⁶⁶ In the context the problem is that one’s attitude or frame of mind revolves around him’s self and is a high attitude than is fitting for one the body of Christ. Paul was concerned about believers having an attitude above other believers. Such an attitude would work by believers not serving others in the body, perhaps because they would view such service as beneath them. Yet this is part of the purpose of presenting one’s body. God will work out service through the believer directed at fellow believers. Rather than having this inflated opinion, one should have an opinion which involves his or her salvation.¹⁶⁷ Part of the believer’s salvation involves God giving him a gift, a special ability to serve. Verses four and five remind the believers that the body is diverse in terms of service, and yet it is one body in Christ (v. 5). Christ gives character to the body. Christ gave gifts for the body (Ephesians 4:11f). Christ even directs the service of those gifts within the body (1 Corinthians 12:4). Verses six through eight list some of the gifts and the proper attitudes in serving those gifts such as giving with **generosity** [simplicity], organizing with **diligence**, mercy with **cheerfulness**. All these are the proper use of the renewed mind to transform the believer. Such transformation and service can be seen as “love without hypocrisy” (v. 9), and all relate to Christ’s character and position and produces stability in the believer.

The believer can put on the Lord Jesus Christ (13:14).

Beginning in Romans 5, Paul began to address the believer’s problem of the sin nature. Chapter five demonstrated its origin, chapter six God’s provision for freedom, chapter seven the inability of law to provide freedom, chapter eight the role of the Spirit and the inability for anything to separate the believer from God’s love. Chapters nine through eleven address the present relationship of God and Israel as proof that even Israel has not been separated from God’s love. Chapter twelve then encouraged the believer to present him or herself to serve

¹⁶³ W.E. Vine, *The Collected Writings of W.E. Vine, Vol. 1*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996). p. 415.

¹⁶⁴ This is an anarthrous statement, emphasizing the quality of mind. We do not have **the** mind of Christ, that is His alone, but our new mind is of the same quality as His.

¹⁶⁵ Bruce Corely and Curtis Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) p. 137.

¹⁶⁶ The root verb is φρονεω, the lexical form in this passage υπερφρονεω.

¹⁶⁷ Based on the same root, this infinitive has the prefix σωσ- indicating salvation - σωφρονεω.

within the body of Christ. Such service extended to living in peace with all men including submission to government especially payment of taxes (13:1-10). Such submission can be done in love for one's fellow believers. This leads to Paul charging the believers to consider the progress of this world in which we live and how we ought to relate to it in light of the sin nature. Paul addressed this in the final verses of Romans 13.

The believer still has a sinful nature yet is not obliged to obey it. Living out one's sin nature is living like the others in the world, those who are dead. The believer is not dead, but laying among the dead ones, the believer is asleep (not death) appearing to be dead. Paul charged them, "Awake!" (13:11). Our salvation is nearer than it was at the moment we believed.¹⁶⁸ At the moment we believed, we were saved. The believer is also being saved, as he grows in the various areas of his salvation. Yet the greatest portion of our salvation is yet future. When Christ returns for His Church, we will be changed like to Christ (Philippians 3:20; 1 John 3:2). Our body will be glorified, our soul will be finally saved, and we will experience full freedom from the sin nature. The anticipation of our great future salvation should encourage us to be living more in keeping with our future, and less in keeping with our past.

The character of this time and this world is "night" and "darkness" (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5). John 1:4 indicates that God's life is light, it is active and visible. "Darkness" or "night" is then the absence of God's life, either by existence or in activity. This world operating without the life of God and no desire for God's life has advanced but it is nearing its end (13:12). When Christ comes for us, we will be freed from life under this system. Our freedom from this system is the coming of the day. Verse 12 is not a statement about the nearness of the kingdom, but the nearness of our complete salvation, when our bodies and souls will be glorified (1 John 3:2; 1 Peter 1:9). Knowing that our salvation is nearing, that our Lord's coming is nearing, we ought to put on the armor of light, that is armor which displays God's life. Armor implies protection. The term *οπλα* refers to a tool or instrument, most frequently as a tool for a soldier and therefore armor. Paul did not picture the armor as offensive but defensive. In Ephesians 6:10ff, the armor is to resist or stand against the devil, not to fight him (cf James 4:8). In this context, Paul pictures the armor as a defense against the effects of this darkness in which live.

Before putting on the armor, we put off the works of darkness. Paul likewise uses the metaphor of putting off, as putting off old clothing. One cannot live out darkness will simultaneously living out life. One cannot live resurrected with Christ without first dying with Christ. The works which Paul specifically identified as being a problem are works of the flesh: partying, drunkenness, immoral sex, sexual promiscuity/display, argumentativeness, and zeal. As Paul wrote in 6:11, putting these off would involve counting one's self to be dead to the sin nature.

Now Paul reaches his point, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (13:14). In Ephesians 4:24, Paul instructed believers to put on the new man as in Colossians 3:10. The new man is not the "new self" as in the NASB, but the unified humanity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. To put on the Lord Jesus Christ is to put on our position not only in Jesus Christ, but also recognizing Him to be our God who has the right to be our Master (cf. 10:9,10). In Galatians 3:27 we are clothed with Christ, He marking us as sons as our robe of maturity. The purpose is to put on Christ that He might be seen through us. He is our position. We are united with all other

¹⁶⁸ πιστεω is Aorist, not considering an ongoing act of faith, but faith in the past. One act of faith in the past settled the matter of our salvation. We are not saved by ongoing faith, except where "save" indicates growth.

grace saints in Him, and we can put Him on, rather than living in the matters of this present age and sin nature. He gives character to the new creation and that character brings stability.

Christ is Lord of living and the dead (14:6-9).

Chapter 14 introduces one of the larger issues tied stability: can certain actions specially make one acceptable or unacceptable to God? Paul mentions three issues in this chapter: eating meat versus being vegetarian (for religious purposes), observing Sabbath versus not observing Sabbath, drinking wine versus abstaining. While the issue of the sin nature in general is a significant matter regarding stability, the fact that Paul gives such space to these three issues demonstrates their significance.

Stability rests upon maturity. Those who question the acceptability of certain actions are classified by Paul as “being weak in the faith” (Romans 14:1). The weak were vegetarians (v. 2). Paul charged them to not judge someone else’s servant (v. 4). Judging is done by those weak in the faith. Those who are strong in the faith are not to treat the weaker with contempt (v. 3). The same can be said for observance or non-observance of days (Sabbath) (v. 6). So, whatever one does, he does it not to or for him or herself, but to the Lord (v. 6). Living or dying, whatever we do, we do to the Lord. Christ died and lives so that He is Lord of both living and dead (v. 9).¹⁶⁹ Death does not end our relationship to the Lord. If we die, it is because the Lord has brought about our death (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). In death, we are transferred into a heavenly kingdom (2 Timothy 4:18). Even in death, believers have activity before the Lord. His Lordship reminds the Romans, that the issue of acceptability involves answering to the Lord, not to others. Paul expressed this similarly in Philippians 1, that if ones does the right action, even if the mental motivation is wrong, others are to leave them alone and let them serve. Paul rejoiced even over those who proclaimed Christ from the wrong attitude, because Christ was being proclaimed.

Paul assures both types of believers that they will stand before their Lord, because the Lord is able to make them stand (v. 4). Our Lord deals with each of us individually. I do not give an account for another, no one else gives account for me. Each gives account for his or herself to the Lord (vv. 10-12). However, before Paul makes this point, he assures his readers that the Lord is able to make each stand, his point being that none, the weak or strong, have any better or lesser standing before the Lord, because it is not they but the Lord who makes them stand. This is a basis of stability.

Rather than judging other believers for their actions, Paul encouraged them to judge not to place an obstacle or cause of stumbling before their brothers (v. 13). Harkening back to his charge in chapters 12, their actions should express love for their brothers (v. 15). Loving other believers would involve not doing anything that would ruin them. They should recognize that Christ died on in place of (υπερ) all believers, even one who is experiencing ruin (απολλθμι,14:15). “Ruin” describes a state in which they are not becoming what God intended them to be. In this context, getting weak believers to do what you do, even though that believer is not convinced it is right before God. The mature believer should consider his conduct as being in the kingdom of God. Being in the kingdom of God is not about what one can eat or drink. In this present dispensation, believer have been freed to eat anything, and

¹⁶⁹ Verses 8 & 9 indicate that “the living and the dead” both refer to believers.

must reject nothing (1 Timothy 4:3). However, God didn't save us for this, rather He saved us to serve, to show righteousness, peace and joy all produced by the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Recognizing Jesus Christ Lordship over us as individual believer, each can serve Christ as a slave by pursuing righteousness, peace and joy as opposed to his individual rights (14:17-18). Strong believers living in this fashion will help those who are weak to become stable, because we are living out Christ's character toward them.

I note at this point that between chapters 14 and 15, the last verses of Romans 16 occur in a number of Greek manuscripts, and fit best in terms of the subject matter. The last verses of Romans 16 answer the question: how do these believers go from this weak and unstable state to one of stability? Our whole study is examining this contention.

Continuing with the text as we have in the critical text, Paul encouraged the Romans believers to bear the weakness of the weak (Romans 15:1). Believers ought to seek to please fellow believers, not to please one's self. Paul referenced Christ as an illustration for He did not please Himself (15:3). The reproaches or arrogant insults he endured were ultimately directed at the Father. Further, Christ received the believer without regard to his issues (15:6). He didn't welcome only those believers who were ready to advance immediately to maturity. Christ also has become a servant with reference to the circumcision to confirm the promises made to the fathers (15:8). The circumcision or Jews likely constitute the largest group of weak believers. They struggled to let go of law with its many restrictions. They struggled with living by grace and thereby to recognize that they are acceptable before God. Learning this brings stability.

Paul had a boast in Christ Jesus because of His work in Paul (15:17-18).

Having addressed the need of bearing the weakness of other believers, Paul charged the Romans to receive one another in a manner comparable to how Christ received them (v. 7). As noted above, the Jewish believers probably comprised the largest segment of weak believers. For this reason, Paul pointed out that Christ has become a minister of the circumcision (v. 8). "Has become" is a Perfect passive infinitive verb, emphasizing that He became a minister in the past and remains or continues to be a minister. Paul quoted from four Old Testament passages (Psalm 17:50; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 11:10) to demonstrate that though Christ was a minister to the circumcision, He also addressed the Gentiles in a positive way: confessing God's name to the Gentiles, be glad Gentiles, you praise the Lord all the Gentiles, the root of Jesse will rise to rule the Gentiles and the Gentiles will hope in Him. This hope gives rise to filled with hope from hoy and peace to believe (v. 13). Peace and joy were qualities mentioned in 14:17 characteristic of the kingdom of God. The object of hope and faith would be that God could stabilize these believers. This interpretation assumes that the final verses of chapter 16 should be between chapters 14 and 15.

Paul turns to focus on his ministry to the Gentiles (15:16). He was doing a priestly work concerning Jesus Christ and directed at the Gentiles. The priestly work is *leitourgeo* to do priestly work for people *leitōs*. The Lord had given Paul a ministry to the Gentiles (1:5; 11:13; Galatians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:7). Paul also used the term for temple work in verse 16. This priestly work has the goal of offering the Gentiles as ones set apart by the work of the Spirit (v. 16). Paul expressed this goal in 1:5 and 15:18; he wished them to be obedient by acting from faith. This meant the Gentiles believer needed to know God's promises for them so they could believe those promises and act upon them. Those promises involve the equality of Gentiles in

the body (Ephesians 3:6) and that Christ indwells all Grace believers (Colossians 1:27) so Paul could present every man mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28).

The gospel of God is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 2:2. It is a good news about God. In 1 Thessalonians it emphasizes that believers are “in the Father” as well as in Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Based upon Christ’s words in John 17:21, 23 it involves oneness of those believer in Christ. This means that believers of both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds are equal in Christ and in the Father. That oneness is an encouragement to the Gentile believers in Rome to receive their Jewish brothers who are weak in the faith.

Finally, in Christ Jesus, Paul had a boast (Romans 15:18). Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers to boast in the Lord if they were going to boast (1 Corinthians 1:31). So, in Romans 15, Paul’s boast intends to encourage the Gentile believers to boast in the Lord, not in what they can now do: eat whatever they wish, treat all days the same, drink whatever they wish. The weak believers cannot boast in these because they were struggling with these very issues. However, what God says about believers in relationship to Jesus Christ is shared by all believers. Those benefits in Christ become the basis a boast which can and should be shared by all Grace believers. Boasting the proper benefits stabilizes believers.

There are good things said (about the believer?) regarding Christ (15:29). Believers can be co-workers, and approved in addition to simply being in Christ (16:3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). This extensive list is compiled only from facts Paul mentions in the letter to the Romans. These facts are part of the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

The Revelation of a Mystery

God not only stabilizes believers by the standard of his good news and proclamation regarding Jesus Christ, but also by the standard of a revealed mystery. A mystery was a new truth at the time it was written. Our current text in Romans 16:25 as well as Colossians 1:26 and Ephesians 3:5 and 9 indicate in similar manner that a mystery was previously hidden or unrevealed. The verb “hidden” in Ephesians 3:9 is a perfect tense, indicating that in the past it was hidden with the results that it continued during the “ages.” In verse five we find a mystery was not made known in the past compared to the present in which it is known.¹⁷⁰ Colossians 1:26 also has a perfect participle - “having been hidden” - from ages and generations. Because the Colossian problem involved angels and the worship of angels, Paul emphasized ages and generations which references human beings. He then stated that the mystery is now made plainly visible. Finally, in our text, Paul employed a perfect participial form of “silent.” Putting all four of these together we can say that a mystery describes a truth which in the past was hidden, unknown, and kept silent, but is now unveiled, brought into the light, made plainly visible and made known.

Though Paul described a mystery as hidden and silent, many interpreters have understood mystery to be truth written in the Old Testament but unexplained. Part of their problem can be seen in the present context of Romans 16. Paul connects the mystery with his gospel. We have already demonstrated that Paul did not mean the gospel for initial salvation, but a good news for believers. Because many interpreters read the term gospel as nearly

¹⁷⁰ Some interpreters have made much of the comparative adverb *ως*, suggesting that the mystery was known, just not as well known. While this is possible based only the adverb, the other texts which explain the hidden quality of a mystery do not allow for this interpretation.

always referring to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and recognize that the Old Testament and Christ Himself foretold these events, they wonder how they could be both hidden and revealed? Leon Morris takes this approach, “Paul goes on to speak of *the mystery* ... which points to the gospel as something that people could never have worked out for themselves. The truth that the Son of God would come from heaven to live and die for us and that we enter into salvation only faith in him is not obvious and could be known by us only when and as God revealed it.”¹⁷¹ The problem with this view is does not do justice to Paul’s threefold description of a mystery. While perhaps it is true that one could not have worked out the gospel from the Old Testament apart from the plain revelation of the New Testament, the facts are still present in the Old Testament. Jesus told the Jewish leadership to “search the Scriptures” because those Scriptures “testify about Me” (John 5:39). Further, many such interpreters treat mystery as though only one exists. Paul stated that he was a manager of God’s mysteries (1 Corinthians 4:1). He also wrote of several distinct yet related mysteries, which does not allow for a singular mystery. Much of the problem is solved by remembering Paul’s definition of a mystery and distinguishing his gospel from the gospel for initial salvation.

Does the revelation of this mystery comprise the standard of how God stabilizes believers or the standard of Paul’s gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ? W.E. Vine understood the prepositional phrase to modify the gospel and proclamation.¹⁷² This would mean that Paul’s gospel and what he officially announced regarding Jesus Christ was in keeping with this mystery. The two were not in conflict. To understand the relationship between Paul’s gospel and this mystery, we must understand to what this mystery referred. To do this, let’s briefly consider some of the mysteries which God revealed through the ministry of Paul.

Despite English versions adding a definite article to mystery, the noun is anarthrous. The anarthrous state emphasizes quality rather than specificity. Unlike his statement in 1 Corinthians 4:1, neither does Paul say, “mysteries,” but a singular kind of mystery, perhaps the idea is “mystery truth.” The following lists mysteries in an approximate chronological order.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 - **The mystery of lawlessness** reveals that all through history Satan has always had a man ready to bring on the scene by which he will lead astray the nations, yet he is presently restrained, most likely by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:1, 7 - **God’s wisdom in mystery form** relates to how God intends to bring us to glory (v. 7), and it involves things God has prepared for those loving Him (v. 9). It is related to other mysteries.

1 Corinthians 15:51 - **The mystery that we will not all sleep** reveals that some believers will directly glorified and not see death. This happens at the same moment that God raises and glorifies those believers who have died as part of the body of Christ.

¹⁷¹ Morris, *Romans*, op cit. p. 546.

¹⁷² W.E. Vine, *Collected Works*, op cit. p. 438.

Romans 11:25 - **The mystery of Israel's hardness** explains that Israel is presently under judgment but that only part of the nation is hardened to the things of God. The mystery warns Gentile believers against an attitude of superiority toward the people of Israel (a chronic problem in the Church's history).

Ephesians 1:9-10 - **The mystery regarding God's will** explains that God plans to head up all things by the Christ during the final dispensation (often identified as the Millennial kingdom). "The Christ" is Jesus Christ with His Body.

Ephesians 3:4-6 - **The mystery about the Christ** reveals that Gentiles with Jewish believers are absolutely equal heirs, equal members of the body, and equal partakers in God's promise of access to God. This mystery is very important because the Old Testament revealed that Israel would be in a position superior to Gentiles. Therefore, this is not an elucidation of Old Testament revelation.

Ephesians 3:9, 2 - **The mystery dispensation** reveals that God's way of life for the believer is new, it is by grace as opposed to Law. Despite common claims, God did not govern the lives of Israeli's by grace when they were under the Mosaic Law.¹⁷³

Ephesians 5:32 - **The mystery of Christ and His bride** reveals that in the future, the body of Christ becomes Christ's bride. The Old Testament revealed a bride for Jehovah the Father and the gospel presented Christ as a groom but His bride was always unmentioned, because she was a bride. This mystery again demonstrates that a mystery was not written but hidden in the Old Testament. It was just plain unrevealed.

Ephesians 6:19 - **The mystery gospel** is Paul's good news about Christian living by grace and Christian growth apart from Law. While Paul was bold to proclaim the gospel for initial salvation, he needed boldness to proclaim this.

Colossians 1:26-27 - **The mystery of Christ in you** reveals that by Christ's indwelling (Christ spoke of that in John 14:20) results in the hope of glory, or the hope of believers, especially Gentiles, living out the reputation (one meaning of glory) of what God is doing in them. This mystery is important because it contrasts to people trying to live by law, by harsh treatment of the body, and by worshipping angels.

Colossians 2:2 - **The mystery of God the Father and the Christ**¹⁷⁴ reveals that believers can be knit together and share in a unity comparable to that which the Father and Christ share. This cannot be the mystery the Christ is God, that was revealed both in the Old Testament and particularly during Christ's earthly ministry. This rather points believers to this united relationship.

Colossians 4:3 - **The mystery of the Christ** is either that mentioned in 2:2 or Ephesians 3:4-6.

¹⁷³ Some have claimed that the dispensation only referred to Paul's special apostolic commission. However, were that the case, we might wonder, how that was a mystery. Certainly God had said nothing about it previously, but it doesn't bear the character of a mystery, being a key truth which was previously unknown. Paul's commission was not a key truth for maturing believers.

¹⁷⁴ This text has an involved textual problem. The Majority Text appears to best account for all the variations. The critical text does not communicate a mystery. That Christ is God was not a mystery, but revealed in the Old Testament.

1 Timothy 3:9 - **The mystery of the faith** reveals that our way of life by faith was a mystery (cf. 1:4-5). People did act by faith during the Old Testament, but it was never their way of life. Faith and grace operate together as our way of life, as God provides benefits by grace but we appropriate the enjoyment or experience of those benefits by faith.

1 Timothy 3:16 - **The mystery of godliness** was revealed by Jesus Christ being God made visible in flesh. He demonstrated that being a physical being did not prevent individuals from living a life which honors God. Jesus Christ was in flesh and He honored the body through His human nature.

To which of these mysteries did Paul refer? To some degree, all these mysteries flow into this singular quality which Paul designates mystery. We are stabilized by knowing that God deals with us by grace, counting to us all the benefits of who Christ is and has done in His humanity. So in Hebrews 13:9 our hearts are made firm by grace not foods or other obligations of law, and we know that when Christ comes for us, He will bring grace (1 Peter 1:13). We are stabilized by knowing that no difference exists between believers in Christ. So, we believe that we can experience a functional unity among believers as we relate to our benefits in Christ (Colossians 2:2-3). We are stabilized by knowing that we can operate by faith and experientially live out the benefits of grace. We are stabilized by knowing that our future is secure, that we will collectively become the bride and collectively will reign. So in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, Christ will establish our hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father. We are stabilized knowing that as Christ lived a life to the glory of God (godliness), so we can, and that glory is possible because He indwells us. Many of these tie to the idea of God governing our lives by grace. Believers will never become stable if they view their Christian life as an attempt to live up to some super-Christian standard, rather than living in light of the benefits of God's grace. Even when we fail, under grace, God is longsuffering and continues to work with us and bring us along.

The Prophetic Writings

The mystery was kept silent in the past but it is now made plainly visible through prophetic writings. Though English Bibles treat this expression as definite—"the Scriptures of the prophets" [NASB] or "the prophetic writings" [ESV]. It is not definite, and this is the first hint that Paul was not referring to the Old Testament prophets. Peter used the adjective "prophetic" in 2 Peter 1:19 to describe the "more sure" prophetic word. Peter was comparing a prophetic word his readers had which was firmer than the Old Testament prophets. Peter did not mean it is more certain, but that it was clearer as to what it referred, or as Peter wrote, "a lamp shining in a dark place." Peter and Paul both use this adjective of New Testament prophecy.

So, our expression "prophetic writings" is indefinite, it does not have a definite article., However, when Jesus, Paul or Peter refer to the Old Testament prophets, especially reference to the "book" or "writings" (Scripture) they use the definite article. They always say "the prophets." So in Romans 16:26, the indefinite "prophetic writings" is distinct from Old Testament prophets and their writings.

If Paul did not mean Old Testament prophetic writings, then what are the New Testament prophetic writings? We can answer this by considering when Paul wrote Romans. We don't even need New Testament introductions to provide this answer. We can determine an approximate date for the writing of Romans by examining the Scriptures. Paul revisited Macedonia and Greece, spending three months in Greece (the location of Corinth) (Acts 20:2-3). When he wrote Romans, he stated that he had collected a gift from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia (Romans 15:25-26). Achaia included all of Greece, and therefore, it included Corinth. When Paul wrote first and second Corinthians, he had not yet collected this gift (1 Corinthians 16:5). Therefore, Paul wrote Romans after he had written 1 & 2 Corinthians. He had also written 1 & 2 Thessalonians from Athens shortly after his time in Thessalonica. Therefore, Paul had written four letters before writing Romans.

In these four letters, Paul wrote several prophetic statements. He wrote about the judgment seat of Christ in 1 Corinthians 3:9b-15,¹⁷⁵ explaining that our acts of service will be evaluated and appropriately rewarded. In chapter six he revealed that the Church will in the future judge the world and angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). He revealed that some believers will not die but witness our Lord's coming for us while alive. He explained that all believers of the Church will be changed at the same instant, some apart from death and others when Christ raises them from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). In 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 Paul described our present adversity as light yet working at eternal weight of glory. This leads to the anticipation of taking down this tent (the present body) and being at home facing the Lord in a glorified body (5:1-8). We also anticipate being presented to Christ as His virgin bride (11:2). 1 Thessalonians includes the promise of rescue from coming judgment (1:10), the promise that believers' hearts will be established (same word in Romans 16:25) blameless before the Father (3:13), that believers who died will be raised and together with those who remain alive will be caught up into our Lord's presence (4:13-17). Paul further encouraged the Thessalonians that we have not been appointed to wrath but to the special possession of salvation (5:1-10) at which time God will have complete set apart (sanctified) our spirit and soul and body (v. 23). Reading 2 Thessalonians we find that while presently afflicted, God will cause those who have afflicted us to suffer and will provide us relief (1:6-7). Paul wrote of our Lord Jesus Christ appearing and our gathering to Him (2:1). He assured His readers that the day of the Lord has not come, and cannot come until the departure¹⁷⁶ comes first and the man of lawlessness is then revealed (2:3). Paul devotes an extended explanation to the identity and power of the man of lawlessness and the resulting deception of those who rejected Truth (2:4-12). He assured the Thessalonians that God has given us an **eternal** encouragement and hope to establish

¹⁷⁵ The expression, "yet so as by fire" [NASB] or "but only as through fire" [ESV] does not mean that these individuals barely make it. No believer will barely make it. Rather, this expression refers to one of the final works of our salvation. God finishes our salvation by removing our worthless works. Our sins were dealt with on the cross. The Judgment Seat of Christ addresses our acts of service, rewarding what is worthy and removing what is not. So, the text can read, "But he will be saved, now in this way as through fire."

¹⁷⁶ I choose to interpret this noun "departure" as opposed to "apostasy" which is an English transliteration of the Greek and does not interpret Paul's attention. I understand it to describe our gathering to our Lord, and thus our departure from this place of deceit. For further study, see E. Schuyler English, *Rethinking the Rapture* and H. Wayne House, _____ in *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House,).

their heart in every good work and word (2:16-17).¹⁷⁷ He assures them that God will stabilize them and guard them from the evil one (3:3). These four letters reveal much prophetic truth directly related to Church saints. Several of these statements would serve to stabilize believers. These assure believers that we will **all** be changed, all be established blameless, all be entirely set apart to God. Those are vital truths which encourage the hearts of believers regarding their future.

How would these letters written to Churches in Macedonia and Greece benefit believers in Rome? How would they have gotten to Rome? Modern scholarship avers that the apostolic letters which formed the corpus of the New Testament circulated slowly at first. Luke's account in Acts tells us how important the Apostles' New Testament doctrine was to the Churches (Acts 2:42; 6:2, 7; 12:24; 19:20). When Peter wrote his second letter, he commented on Paul writing in "all his letters" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Peter likely did not mean every Pauline letter in our New Testament, but every letter he had read. However, this meant that Paul's letters had circulated enough for Peter to have read several (by "all" he probably didn't mean 2 or 3). Therefore, it is likely that the Roman believers had copies of Paul's early letters. Paul had worked with Priscilla and Aquila while in Corinth, and they had traveled to Ephesus with him. When Paul wrote Romans, they were in Rome again and a group of believers were meeting in their home. It is possible that Priscilla and Aquila acquired or made copies of these letters and took them back to Rome. So, the Roman saints could have had prophetic writings in the form of two or perhaps all four of Paul's early letters.

In addition to these letters written before Romans, Paul makes some prophetic statements in Romans. He assures us the God will judge by Jesus Christ, but that Jesus Christ who is the judge is also the one interceding for us, therefore, Jesus won't judge us. He assures His readers that all believers will stand before the judgment seat because Christ is able to make all His own stand and they will stand (Romans 14).

Which of the mysteries are made plainly visible through means of these prophetic statements? The assurance that all believers will be changed is itself a mystery, and encourages believers in a future different from the present by means of our bodies being changed. In Philippians 3:20 the change is from one of humility to one like Christ's body of glory. The mystery of God's house plans or house rule of grace stabilizes believers by guaranteeing our future (Ephesians 3:2, 9; 1 Peter 1:13). God's grace has assured us that we are holy and without blame in Christ before God, and we will be presented holy and without blame before the Father (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:13). In this very letter, Paul assured his readers that God's grace super-abounds when the sin nature abounds

¹⁷⁷ This last statement is especially important because it involves the stabilization of the Thessalonians' hearts. Paul used the same word as in Romans 1:11 and 16:25. In this location, the verbs "encourage" and "stabilize" are in the Optative voice, expressing a wish but not reality at present. Paul also employed the same form of the verb **στηριξαι** in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 and 13 to express his intention-their stability. However, in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 and 13, the form is interpreted to be an Aorist Active Infinitive rather than an Aorist Active Optative, as the verb is preceded by the words **εις το** which often introduce an infinitival clause. In Romans 16:25 the verb is also interpreted as an infinitive because it follows the participle "the one being able," and the infinitive commonly expresses purpose. So, while 1 Thessalonians 3:3 and 13 express purpose, and verse 13 expresses a sure future based on God's work, 2 Thessalonians 2:17 is handled as an Optative because Paul expressed his wish or prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father not knowing when God might stabilize these believers.

(5:20). He assured them that we are free of condemnation (8:1). He assured them that Christ will make all of us stand before Him rather than fall (Romans 14:4). The mystery of the Christ, that all believers today stand on equal footing stabilizes believers as they learn that God is not making distinctions as to our racial background. If one's sense of stability is based upon one's racial identity, and Jews genuinely had this relationship in the past, then one is stable on the wrong ground. God employs these mysteries tied to prophetic realities to stabilize believers.

The commandment of the eternal God involves why these mysteries have been revealed at this time (Romans 16:26). The word "commandment" in the NASB is the Greek word *epitage* meaning to put in order. It is used for the one who puts things in order while another form of this word *hupotasso* describes the one who puts himself under that order. Paul's idea is that it was God's plan at this time to reveal this quality of mystery. For Paul's readers this explained why this truth was new or previously unrevealed, it wasn't in God's plan to yet reveal it.

For an Obedience from Faith

The noun obedience [ὀποκοή] occurs 14x, and the verb obey [ὑποκούω] 21x in the New Testament. In Romans the noun occurs 7x (1:5; 5:19; 6:16; 15:18; 16:19, 26), the verb 4x (6:12, 16, 17; 10:16). Of the occurrences in Romans, 5:19 refers to Christ's obedience¹⁷⁸ contrasted to Adam's disobedience. 10:16 states that not all who heard the gospel for initial salvation had obeyed that gospel. A person obeys this gospel by believing the promise that he will be forgiven and declared righteous because Jesus died and rose again. The remaining occurrences refer to the obedience of believers.

The exact wording "for obedience of faith" occurs in Romans 1:5, where Paul expressed God's commission for him. Paul's apostleship was not chiefly to evangelize Christ to the unsaved, but for an obedience among all the Gentiles. Paul called himself the apostle of Gentiles (Romans 11:13) and a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth (1 Timothy 2:7). Especially in this last text, Paul indicated that his apostleship was about teaching Gentiles, and teaching is done for believers not unbelievers. The purpose of his ministry was to teach Gentiles so that they could live by faith and in doing so obey God's will for them. In 15:18, Paul stated that he did not wish to talk about anything unless Christ had worked it out through him for an obedience of the Gentiles. Paul used similar language to his stated purpose, that he was seeking an obedience from faith among the Gentiles. Based on study of Romans 16:25-26, Paul does not appear to be referring to the same matter of obedience to the gospel for initial salvation which he mentioned in 10:16. Paul is referring to an obedience within the Christian life which requires instruction in certain truths: Paul's gospel, the authoritative announcement regarding Christ Jesus, a mystery now made plain through prophetic writings. This is all New Testament truth for New Testament believers, not for the unsaved.

Romans six sheds light on what Paul meant by obedience. Five times in Romans six, Paul used the vocabulary of obedience. Paul stated that obedience involves being a slave to the one whom we obey (Romans 6:16). If one obeys the sin nature, he is a slave to the sin

¹⁷⁸ I understand His obedience to involve suffering on the cross, not active obedience (cf Philippians 2:5-7).

nature, and likewise to righteousness. The Romans had obeyed the practical doctrine which was given to them. They had learned how God has provided for freedom from the sin nature and obeyed that revelation. They understood that by God's grace, they were counted to be in Christ, and with Him they were dead ones to the sin nature and living ones to God (Romans 6:11). Therefore, as they logically counted this true of themselves, they were refusing to let the sin nature reign in their mortal bodies for the purpose of obeying it in its cravings (v. 12). Rather they were to present their members to God, as members which are living out from dead ones (v. 13). Those members are presented as tools for God's righteous purposes. It is God's attitude of grace and God's application to the believer of what Christ accomplished which liberates the believer from sin (v. 14).¹⁷⁹ This combines the authoritative announcement concerning Christ with practical truth. Christ sits at God's right-hand and the believer is in Him. God has promised the believer freedom in Christ. While this is not once-for-all freedom as promoted in holiness circles, nor crisis movements such as the Keswick movement, it is freedom at that moment. By believing that God can give the believer experiential freedom, the believer can then logically count him or herself to be a dead one to the sin nature and living to God. Putting that freedom into practice is one example of an obedience from faith.

From Faith

Faith makes concrete that for which one hopes but no visible evidence exists (paraphrase of Hebrews 11:1). Hope is not self-generated, but the result of a promise from God. Therefore, if Paul is concerned for these believers to have an obedience from faith, they must have a promise from God as the basis of a hope which in turn is the basis of this faith. To round out our understanding of Paul's meaning, we need to discover God's promise which is the basis of this faith.

Paul employed the noun faith forty times in Romans and the verb twenty-one times. He used the noun hope thirteen times. In Romans, most of the occurrences of the noun faith and the verb believe refer to initial salvation. So, 1:16 looks at those who believe the gospel at the beginning. 13:11 states that our salvation is closer than when we first believed, looking back at our first act of faith in Jesus Christ. 4:5 states that God declares righteous those who believe rather than work. 1:17 is important because it looks at the transition from initial salvation into a life of faith, "from faith into faith." We initially believe the good news about Jesus Christ and then move into a life by faith. Christ is the foundation stone upon which we believe, both for initial salvation as well Christian living, and the one who does so is not put to shame (9:33).

The Christian's life by faith can be partially defined by God's promise to him. Through Christ we have access by faith because of the grace in which we stand (5:2). "Have" is a perfect tense emphasizing that God gave this access to us and we still have it. We have that we will be to God's glory, because God promised us this (5:2). That hope is proved as we face adversity, and it produces further hope as we experience God's faithfulness to us in living it (5:4). That hope does not shame us, as though it worked once

¹⁷⁹ In this verse, "sin" is anarthrous, and therefore is larger than just the sin nature. Grace makes freedom possible from the sin nature but also sin related to Satan and the world system.

and we then fail forever after. Rather, God has given us the Spirit in our hearts who assures us of God's love from which can never be separated, and through which Spirit we are able to live out this hope (5:5). Because the believer has died with Christ, the believer has the promise that he will live jointly with Christ (6:8). Christ has become the end of righteousness for those who believe (10:4). We now live out righteous by faith not by works. Each believer has a God-given gift or ability to serve others in the body of Christ. God has given a measure of faith to accompany each gift (12:3, 6). Presumably that measure of faith is directed at the promise that the believer can indeed serve his or her gift for the benefit of others. One promise at which we can direct faith is that we can eat all things (14:2). This promise assures us that what we eat cannot alter our relationship to God in any way. Yet some are weak in this set of promises, and still fuss over minute details for fear of it disrupting his or her relationship with God. In this environment, Paul encouraged those who were strong in the faith regarding these "questionable" matters to keep their faith between they and God so as not to cause problems to those weak in the faith.

Let's review this list of promises. We have access to God. We can live to God's glory. We will live with Christ. I can live righteously apart from law. I can exercise my gift for the benefit of others. I can eat whatever is want, and presumably don't have to observe a specific day. Several of these promises are directly tied to Christ. We have access through Christ. We will live with Him. He is the resting place (foundation) for my faith. He ended the law as a means of righteousness for me. He will make me stand, therefore, food can neither improve or negatively affect my salvation.

Epiphany: Thank you God!

Stability comes by appreciating this gospel, who Christ is for us now, and both of those in keeping with mystery truth (general) now made plain through prophetic writings. Some of the Roman saints were struggling in their stability due to their struggle with the sin nature. They did not understand that the struggle with the sin nature and acting from the sin nature did not bring condemnation. Some of the Roman saints were struggling in their stability due to the adversity they faced. They did not understand that nothing is able to separate them from the love of God to them in Christ. Some of the Roman saints were attempting to find their stability in observance of Sabbath, avoidance of meat and wine. Failure to do these resulted in a sense of instability. Knowing that stability comes through God's work not ours, leads the believer to operate by faith and this results in obedience. How can one properly obey, if one is always worried about his or her future? The obedience is to come from faith not fear. Operating from faith rather than fear marks maturity. Fear marks immaturity. John stated that mature love throw out fear, because fear has punishment and this illustrates well this principle (1 John 4:18). God desires believers to be stable and to live by faith resulting in obedience.

Only God can stabilize believers. We cannot. However, God does download all a believer needs to know to be stabilized. He has revealed the necessities for stabilization in His Word. Therefore, God's people must know what He has revealed for stability: the good news for Christian living, Who Christ is now, how these two are explained by mystery truth which is revealed in prophetic writings. All believers share the opportunity to teach these

things. God-gifted teachers are especially responsible to know and teach these. As believers learn these truths, God stabilizes those believers by the standard of those truths.

1. Romans addresses stability in addition to evangelism/initial salvation.
2. It explains that God does the stabilization of believers, but He does so in keeping with specific areas of truth which the believer needs to know.
3. It involves Paul's gospel, which is the message for Christian living by grace, by the Holy Spirit.
4. It involves the proclamation concerning who Jesus Christ is in the present.
5. These are in keeping with the revelation of mystery truth, i.e. new revelation. Paul's point here is the for those who had come out from under the Law, the Law Scriptures would not reveal what was necessary to be stabilized.
6. These are in keeping with prophetic scriptures: NT revelation about our future and Christ's work for us in the future.

Many Christians lack this stability. They lack this because they are trained under systems of theology that fail to see these points. They focus upon the past. Every time "gospel" is mentioned it is interpreted to be the same message. It is not. The proclamation of Christ usually focuses upon the past, His work on the cross, or upon His kingship for Israel. The first is important for the believer, and in the latter the believer will participate, but the present ministry of our Lord, and Who He is in the present (our High Priest not our King) has tremendous import for the believer. Reformed theology on the one side, emphasizes monergism to the degree that believers have little say in what happens. Present tense salvation is considered under the classification of sanctification and fails to appreciate the nature of grace in our failures. Our failures do not fit within a sanctification model. They do fit in a model of Romans 7 and 8, and illustrated with Israel in 9-11. Reformed and the Covenant variety of Reformed theology press a continuity in the people of God and the program of God. God cannot change, therefore, God does not change what He does. In this way they fail to see that the Old Testament revelation does not provide for the stability of believers. Believers in the Reformed faith are not taught eternal security, but perseverance of the saints. If one is failing to persevere, perhaps living in a Romans 7 experience, that believer does not have assurance, wondering if he or she never truly believed, and certainly is not stable but totters always wondering if he or she will make it. This is also true of the Arminian side which also emphasizes sanctification rather than growth. It too insists that the believer is pressing always onward and upward. The difference is that they too teach perseverance. If one fails to persevere, such an individual is counted to have lost salvation. Neither of these provide for a stable environment in which to grow.

The context of Romans 14 involves believers at varying degrees of maturity.

Paul instructed the Roman saints to receive believers, even if they were weak in the faith.

Romans 14:1

“The faith” is common reference to the spiritual life.

Weak means that they have not developed experience in living the spiritual life. They may know the facts but have not learned to practice them.

Paul instructed them to not engage these weak believers in doubtful dialogues. Romans 14:1

Three doubtful things are cited in this context.

Eating certain meats. vv. 2-3 The mature believer knows that he may eat anything. 1 Timothy 4:3-4

Observing certain days. v. 5 The mature believers knows that every day is the same and should be lived to God’s glory. Galatians 4:10; Hebrews 4:9ff

Drinking wine. v. 21 The mature believer knows that drunkenness is a work of the flesh but there is no prohibition to drinking wine. Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Timothy

These three things are not inherently unclean. Romans 14:14

These three things became the basis of an improper attitude toward other members of the body of Christ.

The weak judged the strong for eating. v. 3

The strong looked down on the weak for not eating. v. 3

The strong and weak needed to know that only God could judge. v. 4

The individual stands or falls before his own Lord not before others. v. 4

The individual will stand because God is able to make him stand. v. 4

These three things can become matters of debate.

Debate rarely ends in agreement.

Paul uses this word [dialogizmos] five times and always in a negative sense. cp James 2:4

Note that the instruction to not receive them to these dialogues is addressed to the strong or mature believers.

The mature believers may believe that they can convince the weak believers that it is ok to engage in these activities.

The mature believer is actually encouraging the weak brother to sin, by acting in doubt in this matter. Romans 14:23

The context brings out the significance of “establish”.

The Greek word establish is *staidizo*.

It means “to set fast; to set in a certain position or direction, ... metaphorically to render mentally steadfast, to settle confirm, ... to stand immovable ... metaphorically to be mentally settled.” Thomas Sheldon Green, *A Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament*, p. 173

T.S. Green also notes that it is derived from *histami* - to stand.

The -*idzo* ending indicates causation.

The resultant meaning is therefore, to cause one to be firm or settled, either physically or mentally depending upon the context.

The Greek word stand is *stako*.

This is a verb form from the Perfect Tense of *histami* - to stand.

It means “to stand ... to stand firm” T.S. Green pp. 172-173

Paul states the solution to the problem between believers in the verses of Romans 16:25-27 which Paul wrote immediately following 14:23.

God is able to make him stand. 14:4

God would make them stand firmly. 16:25 Paul goes one better, changing from stako to staridzo. Gospels #8

“My gospel” Romans 16:25-27

Review

These three verses should be placed immediately following Romans 14:23.

The context of these verses involve the relationship between strong and weak believers.

Paul instructed them how to get along.

Paul instructed the strong believers on the proper course of action in dealing with questionable matters, which troubled the weak.

The point of these verses is that God would make the believer [weak or strong] stand firmly.

Paul’s use of “my” gospel.

Paul gospel is mentioned in two other passages.

2 Timothy 2:8

Paul’s gospel involved the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:8

Paul’s gospel involved Christ’s heritage. 2 Timothy 2:8

Romans 2:16

God would judge the secrets of mankind according to Paul’s gospel.

Jesus Christ died and rose again that He might be Lord and judge of the living and the dead.

Romans 14:9; 2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 10:42 Because Jesus Christ is alive, He can judge.

Paul called this gospel “my gospel” because it was the message which God uniquely committed to him. Paul stated that this gospel was entrusted to him (1 Timothy 1:11). This was the good news about God’s opinion [A.V. glory]. This was the good news about the happy God. This good news combined the revelation that God is a happy God and that this happy God has expressed His opinion [glory]. This is gospel is the measure or standard of healthy doctrine (vv. 10-11). This healthy doctrine is opposed by those desiring to be Law teachers, or those who attempt to impose the Law on righteous believers (vv. 7-10). The Law teachers had turned aside from the charge to live by faith (vv. 4-6).

The Dispensation consisting of God’s grace was given to Paul for believers. Ephesians 3:2; Colossians 1:25

Dispensation refers to the principle or rule of life which governs a household.

The household consists of believers.

The head of the household of God.

The administrator of the household is Paul.

The rule of life for the household is God’s grace.

God’s grace [or “Grace from God”] was given to Paul for the benefit of the body of Christ.

Romans 12:3

Authority was given to Paul to build up [edify] believers. 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10

This was part of his unique apostolic authority.

This was part of his authority as the administrator of this dispensation of grace.

This authority was not intended to tear down believers.

This authority was for the edification of believers, to build them by understanding God's grace.

Paul's gospel was challenged Acts 15

After Paul had been teaching in various Gentile assemblies for some time when the men came.

The men taught that the Gentile believers should be circumcised in order to be saved. v. 1

"To be saved" refers to present tense salvation.

The three tenses of salvation.

Past - "I was saved" Romans 8:24 "we were saved in hope"

Present - "I am being saved" this is more commonly referred to as growth. 1 Corinthians 1:18

Future - "I will be saved" Romans 5:9 "we will be saved"

These men were not questioning that these men were saved.

These men were teaching that believers need to be circumcised in order to go on in their salvation.

The issue is demonstrated by Peter's words. vv. 6-11

Peter rehearsed God's previous work.

God chose Peter to first take the gospel of salvation to the Gentiles. v. 7

God gave them the Holy Spirit just as to the Jewish believers. v. 8

God made no distinction between the Jewish and Gentile believers. v. 9

Peter recommended the response of the Jewish Christians to Paul's gospel among the Gentiles.

They should not place the yoke of the Law upon these disciples.

We [the Jews] were not able to bear the yoke of the Law.

Peter concluded that God's work as communicated by Paul in his gospel would also affect the Jewish believers.

"We will be saved in the same manner to these." v. 11

Peter said that this would be through the grace from God.

Peter's words regard present tense salvation.

The issue is demonstrated by the judgment of the counsel. 15:19-20

They determined four requirements for the Gentiles.

abstain from pollution's of idols

abstain from fornication

abstain from things strangled

abstain from bloods

These requirements were for the practice of the Gentile believers.

They were not talking about past tense salvation.

If they were talking about past tense salvation, then obedience to these four requirements would result in salvation and we know that is not true.

The issue is demonstrated by the directions given for Paul and Peter. Galatians 2

They recognized that Paul had been entrusted with the Gospel for the Gentiles. 2:7

They sent Peter with the gospel for the Jews. 2:7 Peter was to continue to encouraging the Jewish Christians to live like Jews.

Paul later confronted Peter for not walking uprightly with respect to the gospel. 2:19

The challenge to Paul's gospel as found in Acts 15 was a challenge to the way of life which Paul announced to the new Gentiles believers which was different from life under Law.

Paul had been teaching Gentiles to live by grace as opposed to the Law.

Those from Judah attempted to teach these Gentiles to now live by the Law rather than by grace.

Peter recognized the unique message of Paul.

He realized that the Jewish Christians would eventually stop living by the Law.

He realized that God would have them live by grace too. He didn't know when this would happen, though Peter himself began to do so shortly after this meeting.

Peter went to Antioch where Paul was teaching. Galatians 2:11

Peter began to live like these Gentiles. Galatians 2:12-14

Paul would have been out of line to do this to Peter if Peter didn't know better at this time, but he did, for he had learned a truth from Paul.

Peter knew that Paul's gospel was from God and it concerned our daily living by God's grace. Gospels #9

My Gospel Romans 16:25-27

God's means of causing a believer to stand firmly.

So how does God cause believers to stand firm?

Last week we saw that God uses this good news which Paul called "my". Paul called it "my" because it was a good news which was specially entrusted to Paul. It was a good news that announced that we are under a principle of grace rather than under Law.

Believers need to know the authoritative announcement concerning Christ.

"Preaching" is the Greek word *karusso* meaning to announce a message with authority.

There were some who announced Christ incorrectly. 2 Corinthians 11:4

"The word "another" (*allon*) means another of the same kind (e.g., McIntosh and Red Delicious are apples [same kind] but are different varieties). The Judaizers emphasized the earthly ministry of Jesus, but did not stress the finality of redemption in His death and resurrection."

R.G. Gromacki Stand Firm in the Faith, An Exposition of II Corinthians p. 179

There are many in Evangelicalism that place a high emphasis on Christ's earthly ministry and life almost to the exclusion of His present position and standing. We often taught that His earthly life is a pattern for our lives.

Paul told the Corinthians in this same letter that even if he knew Christ according to the flesh, he no longer knew Him in this manner. 5:16

Christians need to hear about our Lord's present position and work.

Paul authoritatively announced Christ in His present position and work.

Paul used specific title to describe Him in Romans 16:25

Jesus emphasizes that He is savior. He is the one who died on the cross in place of my sins.

Christ emphasizes that He is the One who is now resurrected and glorified. He is my position with the Father.

Paul announced Him to the Corinthians. 2

Corinthians 1:19ff

He explained that He is the Son of God, emphasizing His Deity. v. 19

He explained that He is the Savior Who is resurrected and glorified. v. 19

He explained that He did not become "Yes" and "No". v. 19 The legal idea of a promise was that it might be "yes" now but later it would be "no". The certainty of any promise rested upon one's own obedience.

He explained that all God's promises for us which are fulfilled in Christ are "Yes" and "Amen".
v. 20 These promises are absolutely certain and do not vary or change.

This is different than life under law in which your promises from God or always contingent upon your obedience. This is part of the problem in Romans 14. The weak brother believes that certain behaviors may disqualify him from receiving some of God's promises or may, as under the Law, bring him under judgment. He needs to know that because of his Savior and because of his standing in His Savior these promises are absolutely certain.

What should the Grace believer know about Jesus Christ? The following is a short sample of things which are true of our Savior and are counted to be true of us. The more we understand of our relationship to Christ the firmer our foundation.

He died in our place. Romans 5:8

We were put into His death. Romans 6:3, 4

We died with Christ. Colossians 2:20

He became sin for us. 2 Corinthians 5:21

We are not condemned in Him. Romans 8:1

He rose again. Romans 6:9

We are raised with Him. Ephesians 2:5, 6

He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. Acts 2:33

We are in Him, sitting in the heavenlies at the Father's right hand. Ephesians 2:6

We are raised with Christ. Colossians 3:1

He is the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Colossians 2:9

We are the fulness in Him. Colossians 2:10

He is the head of the body. Colossians 1:18

We are in the body. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

He is the One who is loved by the Father. Ephesians 1:6

We have been graced in Him. Ephesians 1:6

We have received all these things which God the Father logically counts to be true of us because of our Savior, our Resurrected and Glorified Lord. This is grace. This is the truth which believers need to know and firmly grasp.

The authoritative announcement concerning Christ involves our access to God the Father.

We have been led to God by Christ. 1 Peter 3:18

"That He might lead ..." is form of the word "access".

Christ by His death provided the basis of our access by Him.

He led us there first in our position in Him.

Now we can come to God through Him. Hebrews 7:25

We have access through Him into the grace in which we stand. Romans 5:1-2

We are already standing in grace in Christ. cp. Ephesians 1:6

Since we are already in Him, He is like a doorway through which we enter for the use of this grace.

We can access that grace to that we can experience it and its benefits in the present.

We have access through Him by the Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 1:18

He is our entrance, our means of coming to the Father in our position in Him.

The Spirit is the one that actually operates in us so that we can practice or experience this place with the Father.

We have boldness and access through Him. Ephesians 3:12

He is the basis of our position with the Father.

He has accomplished everything necessary for me to enjoy this relationship.

He does not sit precariously in the heavenlies.

He constitutes our firm position, therefore we have boldness with this access. It is not a precarious or cautious access.

We have a bold access to the throne of grace. Hebrews 4:16

We have this grace in Christ.

Christ is sitting on the Father's throne.

Our access to that throne is based upon Christ not upon any merit of our own.

We have a bold access to that throne.

We can receive mercy for suffering.

We can find grace at the right time.

We have boldness to enter the holy of holies in the heavenly tabernacle for rest. Hebrews 10:19

We are to come with a true [genuine] heart. v. 22

This is an encouragement to come to God where we are seated in Christ.

One can rest in Christ if he is honest with himself, recognizing that he has been sprinkled and washed and has the right, based upon Christ's merits to rest in Him.

We are to hold firmly our agreement concerning the hope that we can rest. v. 23; cp 4:1

We are to prod one another on to love and good works. v. 24

We are not to cast away our boldness. Hebrews 10: 35

This boldness has a great reward - rest.

This reward comes by patiently enduring the present challenges.

They Hebrew saints will be able to possess their souls so that they can rest despite the difficulties.

Conclusion

The Grace believer needs to understand Christ's present position, for He is our position.

God makes the believer stand firmly by understanding his firm position in Christ.

God makes the believer stand firmly by understanding that Christ is his merit because of grace.

God makes the believer stand firmly by understanding that our conduct does not change our position, our salvation or the promises which God has made to us.

Gospels #10

"My Gospel" Romans 16:25-27

Measured by the unveiling of a mystery

Review

The Romans had a problem of believers at different levels of maturity. Some did not know the spiritual life and as a result they had were spiritually upset by certain behaviors that were not inherently wrong.

Paul is explaining how God is able to make these believers stand firmly. When these believers stand firmly then these issues will no longer be problems.

We have seen that God would make them stand firmly by the measure of Paul's gospel.

Paul's gospel was committed to him by God.

Paul's gospel was an authoritative announcement concerning Jesus Christ; His present position and work.

There is additional truth which clarifies what God is doing.

God will make them stand firmly by the measure of an unveiled mystery. v. 25

Let's define the terms Paul uses.

"Revelation" is the Greek word apokalupsis.

Kalupsis is a veil, a covering.

Apo is a preposition meaning "away".

Revelation means to unveil, to remove the veil so as to make visible.

"Mystery" is a term used to describe a truth which was previous unavailable / unrevealed.

This word is never used to describe something which is hard to understand, tricky or mysterious. It does not describe difficult teachings which seem to be above human comprehension.

A mystery is a truth which was kept silent in times within [between] eternities. Romans 16:25

"Times within eternities" refers to the time of creation, viewed as a paranthesis between eternity which is past and future.

A mystery is a truth which was not made known to the sons of men but is now revealed.

Ephesians 3:4-5 God revealed this mystery through Paul.

A mystery is a truth which was hidden with God. Ephesians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 2:7

A mystery was kept secret since the ages but is now made plain. Colossians 1:26

Since a mystery was a truth which God kept silent and secret with Himself but revealed through Paul these are no longer mysteries, for they have been made plain to us!

A mystery is a truth which was for the continued growth of those who are already growing. 1 Corinthians 2:6

Paul revealed this truth to those who were maturing.

If these weak Roman believers would not begin to grow by practicing what they had been taught about their spiritual lives, then they wouldn't be able to digest this truth which had been a mystery.

"The prophetic writings" v. 26

This is not Old Testament prophetic scriptures because prior to Paul's ministry this truth was a mystery and was not revealed to or by Old Testament prophets.

There were New Testament prophets. Ephesians 4:11

These prophets had a part in revealing these mysteries.

Paul received the revelation of these mysteries from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul had to initially begin the revelation of each mystery as the steward of this dispensation. Ephesians 3:2

The other apostles and prophets received the revelation of these mysteries from the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 3:5

After Paul and Barnabas returned from announcing this gospel to the saints in Jerusalem, two prophets encouraged and strengthened the saints. Acts 15:30-35

The prophetic writings included Paul's other letters as well as those by the prophets.

Other believers wrote letters that were not Scripture but were still helpful to others as the communicated truth which God had revealed, perhaps similar to the benefit we derive from a friend's Bible study letter or a Bible study book.

This mystery reveals God's work by grace in the life of believers. We have previously established that the good news which was uniquely committed to Paul announced life under grace for believers rather than under law.

It is the grace from God.

The expression "grace of God" or "God's grace" is more clearly understood as the grace that has God as its source, hence "grace from God."

This grace is seen not as a substance but as an attitude which God has towards others.

This grace is seen in a provision from God. We see or recognize grace from God by something God accomplishes through that grace.

Titus 3:7 We were declared righteous by this grace from God. Righteousness is the provision which we did not deserve.

1 Corinthians 15:10 - Paul was an apostle by this grace from God. Apostleship was the undeserved gift.

Ephesians 2:5 We were made alive as part of our salvation by grace. Life is the provision.

Ephesians 2:7 We will one day see the riches from this grace from God by means of kindness. Kindness is the demeanor [attitude] which puts others at ease. God will put us at ease before Him.

The dispensation of the grace from God is twice referred to as a mystery.

Ephesians 3:2, 9 This dispensation consisting of the grace from God was previously a mystery.
v. 9

Colossians 1:25-26

Paul filled up God's Word, meaning God had more to say than had been said in the Old Testament, and Paul was one of those God used to fill up what He desired to say.

A dispensation is a rule of life.

The word dispensation is oikonomos.

oikos = house

nomos = law

Together they refer to the rule of a household, the economy by which a household operates.

Israel from Sinai to Pentecost were governed in their daily conduct by the Mosaic Law.

We are governed in our daily conduct by God's grace.

We are not under Law but under grace.

Moses gave the Law but the Grace came to be by Christ. John 1:17

We have freedom from the sin nature because we are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:14, 15

Gospels #11

My Gospel - The Mystery of the Dispensation consisting of the Grace from God.

The Roman believers needed to know that God can stabilize believers. He does so by the mystery concerning the dispensation consisting of the grace from God.

The problem is that many believers attempt to live their lives by the Mosaic Law. But this is a misuse of the Law.

Why was the Law given?

The Law entered so that the trespass would increase [abound]. Romans 5:20

The Law was added for the favor of transgressions. Galatians 3:19 "Favor" indicates a helpful benefit. Law made transgression possible.

God gave the law to demonstrate man's sinfulness and deep need of God's work.

What did the Law do?

It effectively motivated the sin nature. Romans 7:5 Paul's use of *energeō* indicates that the sin nature operated effectively through the Law, that is, the Law was the agency which prodded the sin nature to action.

The Law forbid actions, therefore enticing the sin nature to rebellion. Romans 7:7-8

The Law's nature is not the nature of sin.

The Law points out sin.

The Law was the means through which Paul's sin nature was motivated to break the tenth commandment.

The Law appealed to the rational [spiritual] of the individual. Romans 7:14

The Law is good because it points out sin. Romans 7:16

The Law was the strength of the sin nature. 1 Corinthians 15:56

The Law gave a full-experiential knowledge of the nature of sin. Romans 3:20

The Law brought a curse upon a person who did not continue in all the Law to do it. Galatians 3:10 It was a ministry of death and condemnation. 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9

What could the Law not do?

It couldn't operate with faith. Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:12 Our rule of life is by grace and by faith. 1 Timothy 1:4

It was weak because of the flesh. Romans 8:3

All it could do was point out sin.

All it could do was intimidate people to obey by the threat of punishment.

It could not direct the life of a righteous man. 1 Timothy 1:9

It wasn't for a righteous man.

It was for unrighteous men.

It directed people not to break commandments.

It directed people to offer sacrifices and offerings.

It didn't tell righteous people how to go on living.

It could not make anyone mature. Hebrews 7:19; 10:1

It continually reminded them of their sins.

It continually reminded them of their need which was not yet met.

What did Christ do with the law?

He is the end of the Law for righteousness to all who believe. Romans 10:4

He has released those under law from the law by making them part of His body. Romans 7:4, 6

He wiped out the handwriting which was against us and nailed it to His cross. Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:14

We do not live by law but by God's grace

When did grace for living begin?

It began with Christ's ascension. John 1:17

The law was given through Moses. God was the source of that law but He gave it through Moses.

The grace came to be through Jesus Christ.

John is not writing about grace in general, for that had been some grace during the time of law.

John uses the definite article, writing about the grace as a specific, identifiable way of life.

John does not write that the grace was given through Christ as the law

was given through Moses. He writes that it came to be [Gk. ginomai] through Christ. Christ was the agent through whom the grace came into existence.

For this reason, Paul often calls it the grace from our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was initially announced through the Apostle Paul as a mystery. Ephesians 3:2, 9

It is the grace from God. v. 2

It is grace as a way of life for New Testament believers. This is the meaning of the word “dispensation”. v. 2

It is this way of life by grace which was a mystery. v. 9

What could grace do that law could not?

We are child trained by grace. Titus 2:12-14

The term child training or “disciplined” describes the work of raising a child.

The grace from God points us to God’s provisions and then to the life which is consistent with those provisions. It is most important to note, that God does not direct us to make ourselves worthy in order to receiving blessings. God directs us to walk worthy because by His grace, we already have all blessings.

We should deny ungodliness, the quality of life which is contrary to God’s very nature. v. 12

We should deny worldly lusts, which is the misuse of what God has provided us. v. 12

Using “love” [agape] for things of this world system instead of believers is worldly.

We should live soberly [with a frame of mind set upon our salvation]. v. 12

We should live righteously, doing things right, which are consistent with the grace from God. v. 12

We should live godly, expressing by our lives God’s kind of nature, which is honoring to Him. v. 12

We should live eagerly expecting the appearing of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ. v. 13

What had God done by grace to which He points us to consider how we should live?

We are in a state of having been saved by this grace from God. Ephesians 2:5, 8

We have been graced in Christ. Ephesians 1:6 Everything which God gives us or counts true of us in Christ is because of His grace.

We can be strengthened in the inner man by that grace. 2 Timothy 2:1

Paul had been strengthened by it. 1 Timothy 1:12

Paul found it was sufficient to provide him the strength to do God’s work and will. 2 Corinthians 12:9

We can grow by God’s grace. 2 Peter 3:18

We are able to be built up by the Word concerning His grace. Acts 20:32

We positionally stand in this grace and are to mentally stand in His grace. Romans 5:2, 1 Peter 5:10, 12

Our salvation will be completed by grace. 1 Peter 1:13

We do not yet see Christ. v. 8

He will complete our salvation when He comes. v. 9

He will bear grace to us when He comes. v. 13

In this way we will be
blameless.

Ephesians 5:25-27

1 Thessalonians 3:13

In this way we will be like Him.

1 John 3:1, 2

Philippians 3:20-21

In this way we shall appear with Him in glory.

Colossians 3:4

In this way we will be one bride with one garment.

Ephesians 5:31-32

Revelation 19:7-8 -plural saints & righteousnesses but one garment.

How does this mystery concerning the grace from God as our rule for life stabilize Christians?

It causes the believer to focus upon God's work not his own.

It informs the believer that God does not operate upon some point system.

It teaches the believer that the Law can condemn but can not make a believer firm, stable or bold with reference to God.

Paul told the Hebrews, "It is good to make the heart firm by grace not by food..." This is the very issue in Romans, these believers will never be firm if they continue to live by law, they need to know what they already have in Christ and allow God to make them firm by His grace rather than by obedience to a set of legal codes.

The Law was Israel's righteousness and therefore always depended upon their conduct.

Deuteronomy 6:25

Christ has become our righteousness. 1 Corinthians 1:30