

*A Study on
the Epistle
to the
Romans*

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Bible Study Guides for the New Testament

Writing a book was not on my mind when this effort was initiated some years ago. In fact, it began when a member of my Sunday School class commented that his son had talked about committing suicide the previous week. As a result, I felt an urge to see what the Bible had to say about hope, with a view toward helping his son cope with his suicidal feelings. The result of that effort was an article entitled: “Hope and the Miraculous Three Pound Computer,” located in Chapter 6 of the book [After the Big Bang](#). My next writing endeavor was a fallout from a Sunday School class discussion about temptations, or trials, and their purpose in our lives. An article entitled “The Trials of Job” located in Chapter 7 of the same book resulted from that effort. After this I began to feel a prodding from the Lord to continue studying and writing. The chapters in this book document what I subsequently learned about two of God’s greatest and most marvelous creations: earth and mankind, who He made to exercise dominion over it.

Some of the material presented in these New Testament Bible Study Guides conflicts with commonly held viewpoints, and differs as well on the definitions

of some words used to explicate them. One thing I have learned through this effort is that the meaning of many of the words used in the Bible is not uniformly agreed to by expositors, and in many cases, not agreed to by the various versions of the Bible. For example, in the KJV of the old testament (OT), the word “soul” is used over 780 times. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words notes that in over 400 of these uses, the Hebrew word used is misinterpreted. I mention this not to heap criticism on the KJV, for it is my personal Bible, and I love it dearly, but to point out the importance of consulting Hebrew and Greek sources, and good conservative lexicons, when trying to understand difficult scripture. The meaning of some words is not absolutely clear even then. Nevertheless, this is the process I have followed in this effort.

I am a retired engineer: my education and work experience sparked a great interest in details. I found that to understand the technical difficulties and problems that arise in the operation of complex machines, a good understanding of the details of the design is absolutely necessary. What is presented herein is an analysis of important details in God’s creation of the earth and man: his habitat and milieu. However, no description is completely adequate to portray

the unbelievable complexity and efficacy of tripartite man. Scientists and engineers have tried to duplicate the various subsystems in God's design of man for years, with limited success. Part of the problem is that we do not understand many of the operational details, but the greatest impediment is probably the fact that man is composed of three parts: spirit, soul, and body, two of which (spirit and soul) are immaterial, and are thus largely beyond the scope of scientific and medical analysis. The third part, the highly complex body, is strongly influenced by these two immaterial parts. God has given mankind a great challenge in trying to understand tripartite man. What better model could we find for our study than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: spirit, soul and body in perfect relationship. When Jesus came to earth He emptied Himself, and was formed in the likeness and fashion of a man. Like us, He was a tripartite being, but without a sin nature. Thus, He was the perfect man, the ideal for all to emulate.

I read a book several years ago by Watchman Nee in which he made the observation that one of the primary ways God speaks to us is through our intuition. After that I began to try to follow the guidance I received in this manner, and what is presented herein is largely a result of that attempt. I hasten to

add that all readers will not agree with my conclusions. I have learned much about God's creation, and His design of man through this effort: that may be the primary purpose He had in mind. My hope is that readers will find new ideas in these words that drive them to the absolute authority: God's Word - the Bible.

As references I have used the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT), the Revised Version (RV), and Recovery Versions of the bible, as well as the Interlinear NIV Hebrew - English Old Testament (OT), and the Interlinear Greek - English New Testament (GNT). I have also used Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon, the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, and Webster's New World Dictionary for word interpretation. Unless otherwise noted, scripture passages quoted are from the KJV.

The John A. Dickson New Analytical Bible and Dictionary, Authorized King James Version, Chicago 1950, was a primary reference source. This Bible was given to my wife and I in 1957, and is one of my dearest treasures. It has

been rebound once, and is in need of a repair job at the present time. Thus, the reader can appreciate the usage it has had over these 62 years, most of which has been during the last 25 years. The book introductions have been generally quoted from this source, with changes (mostly grammatical) made only when considered necessary.

Finally, I want to recognize the lady that takes everything I have written, and makes the necessary changes for placing it on the internet. Ms. Sandra Crosnoe is the daughter of two of my, and my deceased wife's, dearest friends, Ted and Jimmie Crosnoe (also deceased). When God moved us (my wife and I), to a Methodist Church in Pasadena, Texas, in 1962, Ted, Jimmie, and their two daughters were among the group of several families in the church that were touched by God in a mighty way that led to a weekly Bible study, that resulted in many changed lives. As the years passed by, and the families went in different directions, we were not able to maintain the close relationship we had in Pasadena. We settled in Lubbock, Texas, in 1982, and I got the call to start writing on the Bible. Sometime after that Sandra was in Lubbock and we got together for dinner. When she learned of my involvement in writing on the Bible she immediately volunteered to help in making it available by publishing

it on the internet. She may not have known what she was getting into, for God has not ceased from giving me Bible subjects to study and write about. This series on the New Testament has been our greatest undertaking, and Sandra's help (as always) has been essential. She has corrected my grammar, argued with me on interpretation, prepared the pictorial cover pages, and generally polished the appearance of the various books in ways that I could never have accomplished on my own. Without her help, this (and other) documents would never have been made available to the general public. I do so appreciate all her work. I believe Ted and Jimmie will give her a "well done" when she joins them in heaven. Her personal website is [Finding Gems and Sharing Them](#).

These bible study guides are available at no charge to read, print, download and share on a platform called Scribd (no membership is required to read/download). They are all listed and linked as a group in [Bible Study Guides by Jesse C. Jones on Scribd](#). Upon completion, most of them will contain study questions in the Appendix. Other works available are listed and linked with [Books for Believers and Seekers](#). If you hit a pop-up page on Scribd asking you to become a member to read free, simply click the 'x' in the upper right corner to remove the pop-up and continue to our links on Scribd. My personal web-

site is [Revealed by Fire - Jesse's Studies](#) if you wish to see my latest articles and updates.

It is my sincere hope that these works will guide you to a personal ongoing relationship with Jesus and a life led and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

JESSE JONES

The Epistle to the Romans

This Epistle was written during a brief stay of three months at Corinth, during Paul's third missionary journey. The time of writing this letter is thought to be around 58 AD. The book of Romans is considered the great dogmatic epistle, and in it Paul gives an exposition of the Gospel in a systematic way that is widely recognized as the outstanding source of Christian doctrine in the Bible. In this Epistle Paul declares his great interest in visiting Rome, and this epistle would pave the way for the complicated visit. He had nothing to do with the founding of this church, and it is unusual that the founders are unknown.

One of the great doctrines of this epistle is that of justification by faith. Justification indicates that a person is freed from the penalty of their sin through faith, and they are accepted by God as worthy of salvation. In this epistle Paul indicates that the only way this can happen is for the sinner to stand in the righteousness of Christ, and have his sin atoned for by Christ

Paul records his reasons for writing this letter at the beginning in Chapter 1:8-13. He states that he longs to see the believers at Rome so that he may im-

part some spiritual gift to establish their faith, and manifest some fruit of the Spirit. Near the end of the epistle in Chapter 15:16-21 he adds that God has made him His minister to the Gentiles, to the end that they would be made obedient by word and deed, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

No analysis of Chapter 16 is included since it consists of diverse salutations and commendations.

The Power of Faith, and The Wrath of God

Paul starts this epistle by stating his authority for being an apostle: he was separated to the gospel of God which had been promised through the prophets specifically to the Gentiles through Paul. The Roman Church was Gentile by nation, but it consisted mostly of proselytes to the Jewish faith, thus, they are reminded here that in embracing Christ through faith, they had not been cast off, but only more profoundly yielded themselves to Moses and the prophets.

Paul goes on to emphasize that Jesus was made from the seed of David,* according to the flesh. (*Refer to [“The Messianic Line,” available on scribd](#) to read/download at no cost and on my website jessecjones.wordpress.com for an analysis of the genealogy of Jesus Christ). This refers to Jesus’ physical nature, which He inherited from David. But He is also declared to be the Son of God in power, which He received from the Holy Spirit. Paul is trying to bring out the completeness and fulness of Jesus Christ, as exhibited by both His humanity, and His godly nature. Jesus is at once the Jewish Messiah, and the Son of

God. He was “declared” to be the Son of God, not “made,” as in his human nature, nor did he begin to be the Son of God when he was made of the seed of David. Jesus (the Word), the Son of God, was with God from the beginning, and will be with Him at the end. He was manifested in the flesh, or human nature, at birth and identified as Emanuel, God with us. His divine sonship and deity were confirmed at His baptism, and again later after His resurrection, when He became the believers’ Mediator and Intercessor, seated at the right hand of God, the Father, in heaven.

Paul tells them of his strong desire to come to them so that he might impart some spiritual light, knowledge, peace, and comfort through his ministry. He states that he is ready to preach the gospel to them, as he has done to the Greeks and foreigners; to the wise and the unwise, for he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe, both Jews and Greek. In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. Faith is a word often misunderstood as “belief.” Actually, the root word for faith is “persuasion.” Faith is the power unto belief, and it is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Believers become more like Christ as they respond to the power of faith given by God, persuading them to believe and act on the

guidance in the message sent. This is the process of sanctification from which the believer becomes more like Christ.

But the wrath of God is revealed against unbelievers, who hold back the truth by their unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest within His creation: the world in which they have lived, thus they are without excuse. Here the apostle is beginning to show that mankind needs salvation, because no one can obtain the favor of God, or escape his wrath, by their own works. No man can plead that he has fulfilled all his obligations to God, and to his neighbor; nor can any truly say that he has fully measured up to the light afforded him. The sinfulness of man is described as ungodliness against the unbeliever, and unrighteousness against the believer. All, more or less, do what they know to be wrong, and omit what they know to be right: so a plea of ignorance cannot be accepted from either one. Our Creator's invisible power and Godhead are clearly shown in the works he has made: idolaters and wicked Gentiles are left without excuse. They foolishly followed idolatry; and rational(?) creatures changed the worship of our Creator, for that of birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things. They wandered away from God till all traces of religion might have been lost, had not the revelation of the gospel prevented it. For whatever may be pretended, as to the sufficiency of man's

reason to discover divine truth and moral obligation, or to govern honorably, facts cannot be denied. Facts plainly show that men have dishonored God by the most absurd idolatries and superstitions; and have degraded themselves by the vilest affections, and abominable deeds. They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature instead of the Creator.

Because of this, God gave them up to lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Even females changed the natural use of the body in expressing love. And likewise, even the men abandoned the natural use of females to that which is contrary to nature, and burned in their lust toward one another, males with males committing shameful acts, and receiving back their just rewards. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do these things, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Jamesson, Faucett, and Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible has this to say about this passage, "When the passions, scourged by violent and contin-

ued indulgence in natural vices, became impotent to yield the craved enjoyment, resort was had to artificial stimulants by the practice of unnatural and monstrous vices. How early these were in the history of the world, the case of Sodom shows; and because of such abominations, centuries after that, the land of Canaan "spued out" its old inhabitants. Long before this chapter was penned, the Lesbians and others throughout refined Greece had been luxuriating in such debasements; and as for the Romans, Tacitus, speaking of the emperor Tiberius, tells us that new words had then to be coined to express the newly invented stimulants to jaded passion." I have not been able to verify that Rome was having a growing problem with homosexuality at this time, but it seems like a logical assumption in view of Paul's discussion at the beginning of his letter.

The Judgment of Sinners, Jews and Gentiles

Paul begins this second chapter by warning those that judge one another; for they are guilty of doing the same things. We know that the judgment of God on those that practice such things is just, and if you are one that judges others while doing the same thing yourself, do you think you will escape the judgment of God? Or if you hate His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering; not understanding that the goodness of God leads to repentance, how will you receive forgiveness for sins you commit? 2 Timothy 2:25 says that God gives repentance when we acknowledge the truth, and 1 John 1:9 agrees by adding that we must confess our sin. But those that maintain a hard and impenitent heart of sin will treasure up wrath unto the end, to be delivered in the day of Great Tribulation (see Revelation Chapter 16). At that time every believer's work will be tested by the refiner's fire, to determine of what sort it is. If any man's work abide he shall receive a reward, but if any man's work be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved as by fire, which is interpreted as severe trial (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). For men that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, who are unrighteous, wrathful, and indignant: tribu-

lation and anguish will follow them, both Jew and Gentile. But glory, honor, and peace will follow the man whose works were good, both to the Jew and Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God. At the day of judgment there will be no recognition of man's nation of origin; or from what parents they were descended; nor of what age and sex they may be; nor in what state and condition they have lived in this world; nor will they be asked what sect they belonged to, or what denomination they have identified with; or whether they have conformed to such and such externals and rituals in religion. They will only be confronted by whether they were righteous men or sinners (sheep or goats); and accordingly, judgment will proceed. For as many as sinned without the law will also perish without the law. And as many as sinned under the law shall be judged by the law. For hearers (only), of the law are not justified before God, but doers of the law shall be justified. For when nations not having the law do by nature the things of the law, they are a law to themselves, who demonstrate the work of the law written in their hearts, and their thoughts accusing or excusing one another. Behold you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things excelling, having been instructed in the law, and having persuaded yourself to be a guide of the blind and a light to those in darkness, an instructor of foolish

ones, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. As the one teaching another, do you not teach yourself? The one preaching not to steal, do you steal? The one saying not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? The one detesting idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God through transgression of the law? The name of God is blasphemed in nations, for you profaned my name among them. For indeed, circumcision profits if you practice the law, but if you are a transgressor of the law your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. Therefore, if uncircumcision keeps the righteousness of the law, shall not uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

What Paul seems to be saying here is that if the Jews had been true followers of the law, favorably representing circumcision, they would have been a positive influence for God in these foreign nations. As it happened they did not follow the law, and thus they were not a positive influence for God. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly only; and neither is that circumcision which is outwardly, in the flesh only. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit.

No One is Justified by Law, But by Faith Only

What advantage does the Jew have, or what profit is there in circumcision, if the final judgment turns solely on the state of your heart? The law could not save in, or from sins, yet it gave the Jews advantages for obtaining salvation. Their ordinances, education in the knowledge of the true God and his service, and the guidance and direction given to the children of Abraham, were all manifestations of God's grace, and undoubtedly contributed to the conversion of many: the Scriptures are focused on the Jewish nation.

What then? Do the Jews excel? Not at all, for Jews and Gentiles are all under sin; according as it is written, there is none righteous, not one. There is none that understand, there is none that seek after God. They are all gone out of the way, they have all together become unprofitable; there is none that do good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are their ways: and peace they have not known: there is no fear of God in their hearts.

God's promises are made to believers only; therefore the unbelief of some, or of many who claim to be believers, cannot negate the effectiveness of faithfulness. God will fulfill his promises to his people (believers), and bring his threatened wrath on unbelievers. The judgment of this world will forever silence all doubts and reflections on his justice. Wickedness and obstinate unbelief by the Jews has proved man's need for the righteousness of God, as well as His justice in punishing sin. Is God unrighteous for pouring out His wrath? God forbid: for then how shall He judge the world? Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to them that are under the law: therefore it certainly applies to the Jews. By the law no flesh will be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin, and all have sinned. Every mouth opened in self-justification will be stopped, and all the world will be considered guilty before the judgment of God.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed, and witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God, which comes through the faith of Jesus Christ to all, and upon all them that believe. There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. They have been justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, who God sent forth to be

a propitiation (offering or sacrifice), through faith in His shed blood, giving His righteousness for the redemption of our past sins (sins that we committed in the past that were passed over through the forbearance of God). But what about sins that we commit after we are saved, and have become a believer into Jesus Christ?

To offer any meaningful understanding of this we need to address some basic facts relative to sin and death. The Bible is absolutely clear regarding the fact that nothing evil, nor sinful can enter heaven, nor come into God's presence. Man is identified as being tripartite: "divided into three parts; threefold." 1 Thessalonians 5:23, says that man consists of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. It seems logical to assume that this verse refers to the same three parts of man that God had in mind in Genesis 1:26-27. We know the Bible indicates that the soul is immaterial, for it goes to heaven or hell at the death of the physical body (Matthew. 10:28; Revelation 6:9). The soul is breathed into man by God the Father according to Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4 says that the Spirit of God made man, and the breath of the Almighty gave man life; and Job 34:14 adds that God can call the human spirit and the breath (soul) to Himself. We know that the breath of God has creative power, He spoke everything that is into existence. In the birth process God (figuratively) breaths a soul into the

fetus of a human on the tenth day of the seventh month of pregnancy. Our human soul gives us life, and in some mysterious way imparts consciousness, making us aware that we are a living person. For more information on this subject refer to: Chapter 2 of the book entitled ["After the Big Bang," by Jesse C. Jones, available on scribd](#) to read/download free and linked on the author's website jessecjones.wordpress.com.

Several scriptures refer to the fact that God made man's spirit: Ecclesiastes 12:7, and Zechariah 12:1, indicate that God "*gave*," and "*formed*," man's spirit (see also Psalm 104:30). Our spirit identifies who we really are, for God is a spirit (John 4:24), and we are made in the image of God. Psalm 139:13 NIV says, "*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*" I believe the phrase "*my inmost being*" refers to our human spirit, for we know that our being is really our spirit that resides in the abode (body) formed in the womb, but returns to God at the death of the body (Job 34:14, Ecclesiastes 3:2, 7:59).

The heart represents the body since the Bible treats the heart as the wellspring of man's life: it is the part of man that God considers when He "measures" a man. Even a superficial study of the biblical use of the word "*heart*," makes one aware of the great extent to which it is involved in all the issues of life. The Bible does not treat the heart as simply an organ that moves

blood through the body. The Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible can refer to the organ we understand as the heart, but they also refer to the inner part or middle of a thing; the seat of desire, emotion, knowledge, wisdom, conscience, rebellion, pride, thoughts, and, in effect, all the issues of life. We note immediately that many of the characteristics commonly attributed to the soul (mind and emotions) reside in the heart, as it is defined by the Bible. I was surprised by a television news broadcast a few years ago in which it was pointed out that until fairly recently, in historical time, the heart was thought to include all the major internal organs. Thus, we should not be surprised that the word “*heart*,” as used in the Bible, does not merely represent an organ for pumping blood through our bodies, but has much greater significance. The biblical heart is the material part of the body with which the soul communicates; messages from the regenerated spirit come through the soul to the heart. As we have noted earlier, the unregenerate spirit cannot receive anything from God. Therefore, before regeneration, the body (heart) is pretty much on its own, reacting to our thoughts, behavior, and psyche, and the results are not good. Genesis 6:5-6 says that the thoughts of man’s heart are evil continually, and that God was sorry He had made man. However, God

gives us a new (regenerated) heart when we receive Christ (Ezekiel 36:26), and this new heart becomes the focus of divine influence.

When we die physically the three components of our makeup: body, soul, and spirit, must be free of sin, and evil, if they are to comprise our spiritual identity in heaven. The soul is immaterial and very integrated with the spirit, which is immaterial as well. In fact, in the OT they were not identified separately, but were thought of together as the “inner man.” Both are formed by God, and go to heaven or hell together at our physical death (Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21-22; Job 12:10, 34:14; Ecclesiastes 3:21, 12:7; Ezekiel 18:4, 36:26; Zechariah 12:1; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 6:9). Matthew 10:28 says, “*Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” Both spirit and soul were given to us by God while we were in the womb, and they reside in the house (body) assembled in accordance with the plan (DNA), passed down to us by our earthly parents. The body is the third constituent of man: it is formed within the womb of the expectant mother’s body through natural processes ordained by God. It is material in nature, and is formed through programmed actions, whereas the spirit and soul are formed by the direct action of God, without any contribution from man. Thus, at death the earthly body, corrupted by sin, cannot enter

God's kingdom, but must return to earth as a seed to die in order to provide the embryo for the sinless spiritual body that will arise at rapture.

1 Corinthians 15:37, 42-44 says, *“And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain: So also is the resurrection of the dead. It (the body) is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”* 1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17 says, *“For the lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so we shall ever be with the lord.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:14 adds another important point, *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”* So Jesus brings our spirit/soul with Him at the rapture, and thus, all three components of our heavenly body are available in the clouds, and they come together during rapture to form our heavenly body. After that we are with the Lord forever - what an unbelievable event to look forward to.

So we now understand how the sinless embryo (that part of the body that joins the spirit/soul during rapture) becomes the third component to complete our heavenly identity. But that isn't the entire story. God wants us to be per-

fect, and He doesn't wait until we are physically dead to start the process.

As soon as a believer receives the Holy Spirit, God starts working on us to renew our minds, that we might be conformed to the image of Christ. This process is called sanctification, and it works under the direction of Jesus at the right hand of God in heaven, and the Holy Spirit within the believer, producing holiness in the believer (Acts 26:18, 32; Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:21; Hebrews 12:14, 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

I have taught on the subject of sanctification twice, and received a mostly negative reaction on both occasions. Sanctification is a subject seldom selected as sermon material, and I believe the reason for this may be that it is thought to be like the law: a lot of rules the new believer needs to conform to, involving work they do not think is required. There are a few scriptures that I believe would change some minds on this subject if presented properly: in Jeremiah 31:33, 32:39, 40, and Ezekiel 36:26, 27, God promises to sanctify all of us, and to work His holiness in us, He does not leave us to it do through our own ability; and Hebrews 12:14 says, "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness [sanctification], without which no man shall see the Lord,*" a fearsome thought for certain.

We now conclude that our heavenly persona (spirit, soul, and regenerated body), consists of the same three elements that make up our earthly persona

(spirit, soul, and sanctified body). God has made a way for us to be adopted as His children while on earth, and welcomed when we come before His judgment seat in heaven. He gave us His righteousness, and He took our sin on Himself at the cross. When we receive Jesus Christ by faith (Hebrews 4:2), and join Him in the death of our old sinful nature, we are cleansed and receive repentance from God. He shows His righteousness by being just, and justifying the one that is of the faith of His Son Jesus Christ. Have we then destroyed the law and made it of no effect through faith? Heaven forbid, for when we receive the One who obeyed the law to the very letter, we receive His nature, and His obedience to the law becomes ours as well.

When we sin after we have believed, that sin must be forgiven before we can enter God's heavenly realm. Therefore, we must again confess our sin, accept God's hatred of what we have done, and again receive His cleansing from unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Jesus has already gone to the cross, so the sacrifice has already been made, and that will not be repeated, but we must be open to receiving forgiveness through God's faith. An important point for the believer is for him/her to "keep" themselves, as recorded in 1 John 5:18, "*We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*"

The Imputation of Faith

This chapter is entirely dedicated to the important fact that we become followers of Jesus Christ through faith that we receive from God, and not through works, or anything “good” that we might do ourselves. Romans 4:2-5 states this thought: *“For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted [reckoned] unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”* This states the significance of faith to righteousness pretty well, but there is more about the word “faith” that needs to be discussed.

The following is from a book entitled [“After the Big Bang,” by Jesse C. Jones, available on scribd](#) to read/download free and linked on the author’s website [jessecjones.wordpress.com](#).

The NT Greek word *pistis*, is often interpreted by the English word faith. The word *pistis*, is a derivative of the root word *peitho*, which means persuasion. Strong's New Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words states that *pistis*, means persuasion, credence, or conviction of religious truth. Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words states that "*pistis*," as used in the NT, means "belief, trust, confidence, although it can also mean faithfulness." The KJV of the OT includes two instances in which derivatives of the same Hebrew word are interpreted as "faith." In Deuteronomy 32:20 and Habakuk 2:4, derivatives the Hebrew word "*aman*," are interpreted as "*faith*." The Theological Wordbook of the OT by Harris, et al, says the meaning conveyed by this Hebrew word, which is the root word for faith, is the idea of certainty, and this interpretation is borne out by the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1. In the causative word form this word basically means to cause to be certain about. In the NIV OT there are seven different Hebrew words that are interpreted as faith, or compound words meaning broken faith, faithful, faithfully, faithless, etc. The 1928 edition of the American Dictionary of the English Language defines faith as: "to persuade, to draw towards anything, to conciliate; to believe, to obey, to bind, or draw, or lead as with a rope or cable. . . The

sense of the verb, from which that of a rope and binding is derived, is to strain, to draw, and thus to bind or make fast.”

Derivations of the Greek word “*pistis*,” are commonly interpreted in the NT to mean either “belief,” or “believe,” and this leads to considerable confusion in trying to distinguish its exact meaning. Further, additional difficulty in understanding the word faith comes from the fact that faith is ethereal and incorporeal. It comes from God, for Ephesians 2:8, says, “*For by grace you are saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves: it is a gift of God.***” (emphasis added). Thus, I see “saving” faith as a force or power by which we are persuaded to believe and be saved, and it originates with God, not man. When the Word of God is mixed (or accompanied) by the power of faith it results in belief (Hebrews 4:2). Vincent’s comments on Hebrews 11:1, says that when *pistis*, is used without the article it is treated in its abstract conception: not merely as Christian faith. He says that faith apprehends as a real fact what is not revealed to the senses. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1). It is belief brought about by the power of faith from God.

Paul continues his defense of faith in verse 6, where he quotes David about the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: “*Blessed are those whose lawlessnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed the man to*

whom the Lord will in no way charge sin" (Psalm 32:1,2). He then asks: Is this blessedness on circumcision, or also on uncircumcision? He goes on to show how ridiculous the argument is as to whether circumcision or uncircumcision, or both, leads to righteousness. In verse 13 he concludes that the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham (or his seed) through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those of the law were heirs, faith would be made of no effect: because the law worketh wrath, for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore, it is of faith through grace that the promise might be sure to all, not only to the ones of the law, but to those of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

Abraham believed in hope, and being about a hundred years old, did not weaken in faith. He did not consider his body to be dead, nor did he consider his wife Sarah's womb unable to birth a child. The power of faith worked powerfully in his heart, and he did not waiver through unbelief. Because of this, it was counted unto him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). But it was not reckoned for him alone, but for us who follow, who believe in the One who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, who was delivered because of our offenses and was raised for our justification.

Sin and Death From Adam; Atonement from Jesus Christ

We are justified when we reckon ourselves joined to Jesus Christ in His death on the cross, and when we receive the Holy Spirit we also begin to receive His nature as we become more like Him through sanctification. One of the initial steps in the process of being saved comes about when God sees that we are ready to receive faith unto belief (Hebrews 4:2). When faith from God is mixed with a ready heart it will lead to belief, and when we believe we enter into His rest, and have peace with our Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:2-3; Romans 5:1). We owe our standing in the favor of God to this peace, which God gives to those that are justified, and we glory (boast, triumph), in this state of grace to which we are led by God. Even in afflictions we rejoice, knowing that affliction produces endurance; and endurance produces character; and character produces hope; and hope does not let us down, because God's love for us has already been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. While we were still helpless Messiah gave up His life. We recognize that there are few that would give up their life for a righteous man, but Christ died for us while

we were still sinners. Since we were reconciled to God through His Son's death when we were enemies, of how much more will we be delivered by His life, now that we are reconciled. Not only will we be delivered in the future, but we are boasting about God now because we have already received that reconciliation.

It was through one individual that sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death was passed on to the whole human race. Because **all have sinned** (not by their own individual act), but implicitly in Adam's transgression, they are included in him as the head and representative of the race. Little information is given in the Bible about how all this came about so I want to offer what I believe God gave me on this subject.

The information below is from Chapter 3 of a book entitled [“After the Big Bang,” by Jesse C. Jones, available on scribd](#) to read/download free and linked on the author's website jessecjones.wordpress.com.

In their “Commentary on the OT,” Keil and Delitzsch suggest that God's intent in placing the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in the Garden of Eden was to train Adam to be obedient, and to transform his earthly nature to the spiritual essence necessary for eternal life. This sounds remarkably like the purpose of sanctification described in the NT: believers

into Christ present their bodies a living sacrifice to God through obedience, renew their minds through guidance of the Holy Spirit, and become conformed to the image of Jesus Christ in preparation for eternal life. Sanctification is the path to holiness a believer must follow until he joins God in eternity. It seems evident that this was God's plan in the Garden as well: to bring Adam to holiness through knowledge and spiritual maturity provided by God's guidance. But Adam wasn't obedient: he received a knowledge of evil that he wasn't prepared to deal with. When God's original plan for Adam's life failed He shifted to Plan B, which was to lead men into holiness by sending a Savior to atone for man's sin, and a Comforter to guide them into spiritual knowledge.

Adam was created with free will: he was free to choose between right and wrong without influence from any outside source. Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil allowed evil to enter Adam's heart (mind). He had no previous exposure to spiritual decision-making, and thus, he had no preconceived bias toward either "right" or "wrong." After he chose to disobey God's command things changed: he came under the influence of what is identified as the Adamic (or sin) nature. If Adam had followed God's plan, and refrained from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil until approved by God, he would have remained free to choose as he saw fit, but teachable by

God, somewhat like the NT believer who is gradually conformed to the image of Jesus Christ by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:2). Sadly, Adam was drawn by his wife to disobey God's command, and thus, to *know* evil. This was a "sea change" event in Adam's life that would also be manifested in the lives of all Adam's descendants.

It happened like this: Eve was first "*beguiled*," by the serpent. To "be-guiled" means that she was truly misled by the serpent: she accepted what the serpent said. Genesis 3:4-5, records what the serpent said to Eve about God's warning to refrain from eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge on penalty of death: "*And the serpent said to the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [God], knowing good and evil.*" Death was the penalty for sin, and in the OT death was understood to be separation from God. This probably came about because there are two aspects to death: spiritual and physical. Spiritual death is separation from God, and physical death is death of the physical body (no breath of life). Satan was using a little trickery here by telling Eve that she would not die (physically), whereas God was referring to spiritual death when He told them that they would die the day they ate of the tree. That is exactly what happened to Adam and Eve after they ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good

and evil: the human spirit within their bodies was no longer able to communicate with God, thus they were no longer able to receive guidance and direction from God, and they were cast out of the Garden of Eden.

Eve was deceived and thus committed transgression, but Adam was not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14), he disobeyed God willfully. Eve thought the tree would be good for food and would make her wise, so she took of the fruit and ate, and gave also to her husband and he did eat. Adam disobeyed willfully, and thereby brought death (separation from God), and the tendency toward evil to himself and all his descendants. Adam made a frightful decision here: in essence he chose to continue his relationship with Eve at the cost of his relationship with God the Father. Adam was not aware of all the consequences of his action; however, he was aware of his disobedience to God's command. His decision "changed everything." He chose to be "free" to make his own decisions: little did he know that he had actually enslaved himself (and all his descendants) to the inclination to sin since they no longer could receive direction from God. Subsequent changes in Adam's DNA probably caused this sin (corrupted human) nature to be passed on to all his posterity.

In his "Theological Lexicon of the New Testament" Ceslas Spicq identifies the corrupted human (Adamic) nature with the word "flesh" (*sarx*) in the

GNT). Romans 7:20 says, *“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”* The Greek word interpreted “sin” in this verse actually means the propensity, or disposition to sin. This is the same word used in verse 25, in which Paul says he serves this law of disposition to sin with the flesh. This is the reason the Bible identifies the word “flesh” with the Adamic (or sin) nature: the act of sin occurs through our flesh (biblical body). Romans 7:5 says, *“For when we were in the flesh, the passions of our sins were working in our members through the law for the bearing of fruit unto death.”* Romans 7:18 says, *“For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good. For to will is present with me, but to work out the good I do not find,”* and verse 21 adds, *“I find then the law, (when) I desire to do the good, that evil is present with me.”* Commenting on Romans 7:18, Spicq states that “*Sarx* is almost personified; more precisely, it retains here its basic meaning of ‘human nature,’ but human nature as vitiated....Paul treats the flesh - the inferior part of a person - as the locus of passions and covetousness. He attributes it to *epithymia*, which is constantly opposing the *pneuma*: ‘the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit lusts against the flesh’: these are (principles that are) opposed to each other.” There are two important points relative to our subject in this quote: 1) there is an impure and corrupting desire within the flesh of man, and 2) this evil desire attributed to our flesh is in reali-

ty our corrupted human nature referred to in the Bible as the old man, the Adamic nature we inherited as a result of Adam disobeying God's edict regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil. *"Therefore by the offense of one (through one trespass) judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (through one act of righteousness) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous (Romans 5:17-18).*

If We No Longer Have a Sin Nature, We Cannot live in Sin

If we are dead to sin it is not possible to continue to live therein. As many of us that are baptized into Jesus Christ are buried into His death, that we might be raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, and walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together with Him, so shall we be like Him in resurrection: we will receive our heavenly bodies when the Lord calls us at the rapture/resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 says, *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the lord.”* Our old man has been crucified with Him, that our body of sin (sin nature), might be destroyed, so that we no longer serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin.

Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe we shall also be alive with Him. For in that He died, He died to sin once for all, but He now lives unto God. Likewise, we need to reckon ourselves as dead unto sin, but alive unto God

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourself unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin no longer has dominion over you, because you are not under the law but under grace. Whoever you yield yourself to, you are his servant to obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. But God be blessed, you were servants of sin, but you obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And being made free from sin, you became servants of righteousness unto holiness. But now being made free from sin, you have become servants to God, and you have your fruit unto sanctification, and in the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Are We Under The Law, Or Not?

Romans 7:1 seems to answer this question, for it says, “*Know ye not brethren, that the law hath dominion over a man as long as He liveth?*” We need to consider this statement in the light of Romans 6:14, “*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*” This sounds like a complete contradiction, but we know that God doesn’t contradict Himself without warning. In Chapter 7, Paul is trying to point out the fact that when we join Christ in His death on the cross, we join in His baptism unto death (vs. 6:3-4). I believe this is one of the more difficult Bible teachings to understand subjectively, and Paul spends the rest of Chapter 7 trying to do that very thing by using the example of a woman who's husband has passed, and how this changes her marital (law) relationship to him. I want to try a somewhat different approach by examining our relationship with our Lord when we become a believer and join Him on the cross. What is described below is the process described in the Bible when God called the disciples, but there are many occasions when God deviates from the norm. Paul himself met the Lord in a dramatic encounter on

the road to Damascus; the thief on the cross was accepted into Paradise when he believed on Jesus before he died; I had an encounter with Jesus at a young age, but did not receive the Holy Spirit until I was 35-years old, and even then I was totally ignorant about His purpose in my life.

We enter this world with the sin nature we inherited from Adam. What this means is that we don't have any spiritual contact with God because our human spirit (our receiver) was disconnected from God as a result of Adam choosing to be his own god rather than to obey God's command (Ephesians 2:2-3). As God promised, Adam died (was separated from God), when he disobeyed His command. The result of this is that we tend to make decisions in our lives based on the sin nature we inherited from Adam: we commit sins. If God has chosen us He will begin to draw us when the time is right (John 6:44). This "drawing" process includes cleaning up our lives from all the filthiness, and idols we have worshipped (Ezekiel 36:25). When God gets us clean and otherwise ready He gives us faith unto belief as described in Hebrews 4:2.

2 Peter 1:4 says: *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."* Ezekiel 36:26 and 27 lists the things that change in our lives as a result: He will give us a new heart and a new spirit, and He will take

away the stony heart and give us a heart of flesh. He will put His Holy Spirit within you and cause you to walk in His statutes, and keep His judgments and do them. I want to draw your attention to the phrase that says, He will make us partakers of the divine nature. Note the change that has occurred in our nature: now we no longer “naturally” do the worldly thing, but instead we have a choice, with an inclination to do God’s will. We have been cleansed of our **sins** by the blood of Jesus, and when we join Christ in His death on the cross we are no longer controlled by our **sin** nature. But this change in our decision-making doesn’t happen all at once. When we receive God’s Holy Spirit some of the obvious sins in our lives (smoking, drinking, gambling, sexual sin, etc.), may change immediately, but He is looking for a total change. To achieve this change we must enter a stage in our life identified as “sanctification,” which means to “make holy,” (or conform us to the image of Christ). Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father, acting as Mediator in directing this continued purification of our lives.

Oswald Chambers in his “My Utmost for His Highest” identifies the word sanctification in this way: “Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that rules Him will rule us. Are we prepared for what it

will cost? It will cost us everything that is not of God within us.” A list of important scriptures related to sanctification is given below:

1. In Jesus’ great prayer before going to His death He asked the Father to sanctify those that were given to Him (John 17:17).
2. Sanctification concerns redemption of the body, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 says that because we are sanctified we must abstain from fornication: a sin against the entire body.
3. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says that God chose us from the beginning through sanctification by the Holy Spirit.
4. 1 Peter 1:2 states that the elect are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by sanctification of the Spirit, and obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.
5. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 is Paul’s prayer for Christians that the God of peace would sanctify them completely.
6. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we are changed into His image (are sanctified) from one glory to a greater glory.
7. Ephesians 4:23-24 says that we are renewed in our mind and put on the new man (sanctified) in righteousness and true holiness.

8. God has promised to sanctify us, to work His holiness in us; He does not leave us to do it by our own ability and power (Jeremiah. 31:33, 32:39-40; Ezekiel 36:26-27).

9. It is the Holy Spirit that sanctifies all believers, and who produces holiness (Psalm 51:10-12; Ezekiel 11:19; Romans 8:9-14; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2; Titus 3:4-5).

10. Regeneration is one creative and instantaneous act; whereas sanctification is progressive. It begins after regeneration and continues until physical death (John 3:3, 5; Col. 2:19; Phil. 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 3:17-18).

11. The Holy Spirit does the work of holiness by strengthening His graces in us (Ephesians 3:16-17; Colossians 1:10-11; Isaiah 40:29; Psalm 138:8).

12. Only those that believe into the Lord Jesus Christ, and in God the Father through Him are sanctified (John 17:17, 19-20, 7:38-39; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 5:23).

13. We receive our promised inheritance by being sanctified through the faith of Jesus Christ working within (Acts 26:18).

14. Hebrews 12:14 states that holiness (sanctification) is required for a man to enter into the immediate presence of the Lord.

15. We are to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives (Luke 1:75).

16. The fruit of the Spirit manifested in our lives grows as we become more holy and sanctified (Romans 6:22).

17. We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit in holiness through the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1).

18. Through love the Lord establishes our hearts unblameable in holiness before God the Father (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

19. God chastises those He loves for their profit, that they can become partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

Paul spends the last part of Chapter 7 describing the difficulty he has in overcoming the remains of the old sin nature. We do not know exactly where Paul was in the sanctification process, but much of what he confesses has to do with the law, and freedom from the law (Acts 22:3). This is a problem less likely to cause most of us in the 21st century the same degree of concern that it did to Paul. Paul was a scholar of the Jewish law, and he had been trained in the early part of his life to revere, and obey its statutes. Some of us today have been taught about the ten commandments, but that is about the extent of our knowledge in that regard. There are many scriptures in the Bible about the

law, and how the law is good, just, and holy. Jesus, had this to say about the law in Matthew 5:17, 18: *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* The thing that is different with believers into Christ Jesus is that we are not judged by the law, for we are no longer under the law, but under the grace of God. This does not free us to violate the law because we are in Him, and He has fulfilled the law: it is now my nature to do what Christ has already done, for I have the nature of Christ within me.

The (Holy) Spirit Witnesses With Our spirit, That We Are Children of God”

I selected Romans 8:16 as the theme of Chapter 8, because it was of great importance to my spiritual life. Many years ago I got into a discussion with a friend about whether we would go to heaven when we died. She responded with a resounding YES, possibly a result of her being a devout Catholic believer. I wondered how she could be so sure, because I had no such witness in my spirit, possibly because I was a less devout Methodist. Years later when I was 35 years old, I had a “Damascus Road” encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ that changed my life completely. And not long after that, to my great joy and surprise, I realized that my human spirit now agreed with His Holy Spirit, that I was a child of God. This was a “sea change” spiritual event in my life, and it gave me great confidence that God had given me His Holy Spirit, much like He had with Paul, who was on his way to Damascus when the Lord entered his life. I have read that John Wesley also relied on this passage of scripture to ascertain when his converts received the Holy Spirit.

We noted earlier that our human spirit was dead to God at birth, but when you become a believer Ezekiel 36:26 tells us that we receive a new (regenerated spirit), for it is essential to our communication with God. Several scriptures refer to the fact that God made man's spirit: Ecclesiastes 12:7, and Zechariah 12:1, indicate that God "*gave,*" and "*formed,*" man's spirit (see also Psalm 104:30). Psalm 139:13 NIV says, "*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*" The phrase "*my inmost being*" refers to our human spirit, for we know that our being is really our spirit that resides in the abode (body) formed in the womb, and returns to God at the death of the body (Job 10:11, 34:14; Ecclesiastes 3:21, 12:7). Psalms 139:13, KJV says, "*For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*" The Hebrew word *kilyah*, interpreted as "*reins,*" in this verse, refers to the kidney as an essential organ of the body. A better interpretation of this word is "*inmost beings of me,*" as given in the Interlinear NIV Hebrew - English OT. It is very interesting that Webster's Dictionary defines the word "reins" as a means of guiding, controlling, checking, or restraining: as the reins of government. Since the human spirit is the element within man with which God's Holy Spirit communicates, I would have a difficult time finding a more appropriate description of the nature and content of the information communicated than this. The last part of this verse seems to

validate the fact that God covers the “*being*” (human spirit), of a person with a body in the womb.

It is by and through the believer’s human spirit that inspiration (discernment, understanding) is received from God (Job 32:8). Thus, it is through the human spirit that believers get all their guidance (communication) from God. As noted earlier Adam forfeited his relationship with God when he chose to “know” evil, and he passed this broken relationship on to us, his descendants. Thus, at birth our spirit is unable to communicate with God, and we desperately need some way of restoring our relationship with Him. Fortunately for us, when we join Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, our spirit is regenerated (renewed), and we are reconciled to God: Ezekiel describes this as a “new” spirit. In addition, God gives us the Holy Spirit when we believe “into” Christ, and we can begin to receive guidance and wisdom from God (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11). Our renewed spirit begins to “quicken” the body with truth received from God. This guidance and wisdom is passed from the Holy Spirit to our human spirit, and then through the soul to the body, or biblical heart (Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

With an active human spirit working with the Holy Spirit, we have everything needed to live a sanctified life (Ezekiel 36:37), through the guidance and

chastisement of Jesus Christ our Mediator, who sits at the right hand of God the Father. Romans 8:5-14 discusses this, and points out that the carnal mind is enmity against Christ: for it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be, for they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you: if the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you He will quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God, and if we are sons we are also heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ, but only if we suffer with Him so that we may be glorified together. The sufferings of this present time do not compare to the glory which will be revealed in us in the future. One of the fundamental laws of creation is that an opposing force is necessary for growth, and to produce strength, stamina, and endurance. Any living thing that grows up without facing any opposition is weak, fragile, and powerless. Any man that wants to develop muscular power to be strong must spend endless days, weeks, months, and years in vigorous training doing strenuous exercises, lifting heavy weights, using the opposing force of gravity to develop his strength. A man who wants to be a great wrestler doesn't just wrestle when he is in the ring. If he didn't work out with wrestling partners he would be weak

and powerless in the ring. A plant that grows in a greenhouse sheltered from the winds and rains, pampered day after day, may grow large and luxurious, but it is inherently weak, and if suddenly exposed to the elements, will wither and die. A plant that is exposed to fierce winds, pounding rain, burning heat, and chilling cold may not look as luxurious, but it will be strong, and not easily destroyed.

Every parent should understand that the very worst thing that could happen to any child is to escape all the pain of discipline, all the irksomeness of education, all the difficulty of work and experience, but instead be allowed to please itself without any restraint. Such treatment would produce an ignorant, selfish, rebellious, irresponsible and wicked son or daughter; just as feeding a child on sweets alone will ensure the ruin of its health. Now and then a father that has made life easy on his children as they were growing up finds himself wondering why they have made so little of themselves. He has given them every opportunity, and he doesn't understand why they are lacking in most of the qualities he hoped to find in them. Has he given them every opportunity? Not at all! He has denied them the opportunity for exposure to the rough road of life that tends to develop strength and character.

There are evils lurking in the carnal mind and fleshly nature of us all for which there is no deliverance except through the crucible of suffering, and pain of discipline; just as the dross that is found mixed with gold in ore can only be separated and eradicated in a fiery furnace. The more we are exposed to adverse circumstances, the more we wrestle with our environment, the more we are challenged by the world around us, the stronger we become. If we would be sons of the most high we must be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. This is why God placed the serpent in Eden with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He wanted man to pass this test by refusing to eat of the fruit of the tree and stand before Him in the strength of character, perception of mind, and quality of life that He intended; but He knew Adam's love for Eve would lead to partaking of the fruit which led to disobedience and sin. It was a test that Adam failed, but God was not surprised by this, for He had planned for this eventuality.

In Genesis 6:5 we read, *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of his heart was only evil (ra) continually."* Again, *"And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil (ra) in the sight of the Lord, was consumed"* (Numbers 32:13). In Psalm 34:13-15, we are admonished,

“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good . . . the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.”

Men shrink from tests for they are structured to determine man's nature under stress. Yet tests prove to be for our good. A school teacher does not give her pupils a test so that she may have the satisfaction of failing them, but rather so that she may be delighted by their display of knowledge. Automobile manufacturers do not put cars through rugged workouts to wreck them, but rather to find how to strengthen their points of weakness. So it is when the Lord allows temptation to come into our lives. It is not intended to wreck us, though at times that may appear to be the result, but it is intended for our good, to make us strong. These trials do for us what the sculptor does for the rude block of marble. They are to do for us what the lathe does for the rough and coarse cylinder of steel. Thus it was that Job said, *“When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”* (Job 23:10). *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy”* (1 Peter 4:12-13). *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him”* (James 1:12). *“When all kinds of trials and*

temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character, men of integrity with no weak spots" (James 1:2-4, Phillips).

Romans 8:24 says we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees he no longer hopes for. But if we hope for that which is not seen, we will wait in patience for it, and patience encourages godliness. We also have a problem in knowing what we should pray for; but the Spirit will intercede for us if we turn our tongue over to Him and let Him have control. I have found that praying in the Spirit often leads to prayer with understanding. Our Mediator, Jesus Christ is the One that searches our hearts: He knows the inclination of the Spirit, and He makes intercession according to the will of God.

Romans 8:28-30 introduces a subject that many refuse to accept: the predestination of believers. I do not believe this difficult teaching can be received by scriptural analysis and reasoning alone. I see this as a decision of the will: we accept this as God's plan, or refuse to accept it, and continue to believe as we have in the past (Philippians 2:13). Thus, in the analysis of this subject I have

included summary information only on the words *election*, and *chosen*, and their derivatives. I have based my principal argument on only one single scriptural truth out of hundreds in the Bible that allude to God's choosing those who would receive eternal life. Most of this material comes from a book entitled ["Can God Be Known?" by Jesse C. Jones](#) available to read/download free and linked on the author's website jessecjones.wordpress.com.

1. Election refers to God the Father choosing (predestinating) those that would be regenerated, saved, and sanctified, before the foundation of the world. By choosing certain people God seems to commit Himself to doing what is necessary to insure that these chosen ones are "called" to Jesus Christ. The word "elect" is used in the OT three times, all in Isaiah. Two of these references pertain to God's election of Israel, and one refers to the coming Messiah. The word elect (elected, election, elect's) is used 22 times in the NT, 21 of which refer to the election of those in the body of Christ (the church), and one to elect angels (see 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 9:11; Revelation 17:8). None of the uses of these words refer to men electing to come to Christ.

2. Chosen, as used in the NT, conveys the idea of choosing recipients to bestow special favor and privilege. The word *chosen* is used in the OT 94 times, 21 of which refer to God the Father choosing Israel, or the Savior. Chosen is

used in the NT 30 times, nine of which refer to those in the body of Christ (the church) being chosen out of the world (see John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4-5, 11; Romans 8:29; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). The evidence from study of the six words choose, chooseth, chooseth, choosing, chose, and chosen, as used in the KJV of the bible, exclusively supports the fact that God chooses men, men do not choose God. Of the 216 times these words are cited, 78 relate to God choosing a man, men, Israel, or the elect. The remaining citations are unrelated to this search.

It seems clear from analysis of the words *election* and *chosen*, as used in the Bible, that God chooses those that belong to Him, and man's free will is not involved in this decision in any way at all. In fact, the Bible teaches that unregenerate man does not have free will in regard to choosing or not choosing God (see Romans 9:10-24).

The Argument for Predestination

I would like to present the case for God predestinating some men to be His children, and leaving others in their unregenerate state by focusing on only one passage of scripture: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and*

without blame [blemish] before him in love: Having predestinated [foreordained] us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:3-5). This passage of scripture says that God the Father chose the elect before the foundation of the world, that they should be sanctified (become holy), and be washed by the blood of Christ and the Word of God. In ancient Jewish marriage rites the father of the groom chose the future bride, and arranged the betrothal (promise to be married) to his son. In like manner the Father (God), of the groom (Christ), betroths the chosen to Christ just as the Jewish father selects and betroths the future bride to his son. The Bible refers to the church as the bride of Christ many times.

I should add one additional point taken from Revelation 21:27, which says that the names of those that God chose before the foundation of the world were written in a book identified as the Lamb's Book of Life. Those whose names are not found in this book are cast into the lake of fire at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:15). This is a simple statement of fact: anyone who accepts the Bible as the inerrant Word of God can easily understand and agree with this statement, but it is important for us to consider what this passage of scripture implies. I have attempted to do this below by addressing the points often brought up by those who feel that God did not mark

out, appoint, or determine beforehand those that would become members of His family by exercising His own will, without any consideration of merit on the part of the elected.

The Meaning of the Word Predestinated

The word *predestined* is defined in Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised as "to limit or mark out beforehand; to design definitely beforehand; ordain beforehand; predestine." Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words adds that the Greek word *proorizo* (interpreted as "predestine" in English), is derived from *pro*, meaning "before," or "ahead of," and *orizo*, which means to appoint, decide, or determine. Webster's Dictionary defines predestine as: "to destine or decree beforehand; foreordain." John MacArthur's Study Bible says that the words predestinated and foreknowledge have the same meaning according to a rule in Greek grammar called the Granville Sharp Rule. He further adds that these words indicate that whoever God chooses He destines for His chosen end: likeness to His Son. He gives to His elect the very nature of His Son through the person of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ). However, use of the word "*predestined* [*foreordained*]" in the above scripture indicates that God takes it on Himself to insure that the chosen will be holy and without blemish when they meet the Lord face-to-face.

Foreknowledge Versus Foreordained

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible says the word foreknowledge comes from the Greek verb *proginosko*, from which the English word “prognosis” is derived. The verb form of this word is used twice in the NT to describe human knowledge, as someone knowing a person or teaching for a long time (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17). As both verb and noun this word is used five times in the GNT to refer to divine foreknowledge (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:2, 20; Ro. 8:29, 11:2). Charles Hodge's “Systematic Theology” states that the difference between foreknowledge and foreordination is that foreknowledge only assumes the certainty of future events, whereas foreordination (predestination) means that God commits Himself to insure that these events come about. The result is the same in either case: the certainty of occurrence is assured. The NT actually uses these words to convey the same meaning. In Acts 2:23, the word foreknowledge is combined with the phrase, “*determinate counsel*” to describe the crucifixion of Christ. In 1 Peter 1:20 the word “*foreknown*” is used in the GNT, while the word “*foreordained*” is used in the KJV. In this case the context makes it clear that Christ was foreordained to this end. 1 Peter 1:20 refers to the fact that God “*foreknew*” that Jesus would come to earth to shed His blood,

and Romans 11:2 refers to God's faithfulness to the people He "*foreknew*." In referring to salvation Hodge says, "If He purposes that a man shall reap, He purposes that he shall sow; if He purposes that he shall be saved, He purposes that he shall believe. Romans 8:29-30 says, "*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate [foreordained] to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, He also glorified.*"

Anti-Augustinians, on the other hand, regard the purposes of God as conditional. He purposes the salvation of a man, if he believes. But whether he believes or not, is left undetermined; so that the purpose of God is left suspended on a condition not under His control, or, at least, undecided. It is however, manifestly inconsistent with the perfection of God, that He should first will one thing and then another; nor can His purposes be dependent on the uncertainty of human conduct or events."

In many cases we surmise, through our "limited" foreknowledge (prognosis?), that we will act in a certain way when confronted by a certain set of circumstances. When we actually find ourselves in that situation we are still free to act, and are conscious that we act freely. Charles Hodge gives the ex-

ample of a parent being certain that he will succor a child in distress, and yet be conscious that his freedom to act is not impaired when he does so. I certainly do not believe that God looked down through time with foreknowledge and saw that certain people were going to accept Him, and these he predestined. This would be as if God, seeing that certain people were going to choose Him, chose (or predestinated) them. Does this make any sense? What would be the purpose of God choosing men if He absolutely knew that these men were going to choose Him? The Bible seems to tell a completely different story: unregenerate man's heart is evil continually. His human spirit is dead to God, and thus, there is no way for him to receive guidance and communication from God. Only God can quicken (awaken, give life to) man's human spirit. Paul goes out of his way to make the point in Romans Chapter 9, that choosing is of Him that calleth (God), not of any works of the chosen. I do not know of an instance in the Bible where God chose anyone for anything based on their works. In fact it is quite the opposite, God chooses people for certain tasks, and then equips them for accomplishing the task.

It is significant that no works of unregenerate man are acceptable to God; only works done through the Holy Spirit in regenerated men are acceptable: works that survive the refiner's fire (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). The foreknowledge

spoken of here refers to God's awareness that in spite of all the attempts on His part to reconcile man to Himself, in the end the only remedy was for Him to choose those that would comprise His family; send His Son into the world to provide a way for these chosen vessels (unregenerate bodies) to be cleansed and cause their human spirits to be "quickened; send the Holy Spirit into these bodies to provide ongoing guidance, knowledge, and spiritual wisdom; and place the risen Christ at His right hand in heaven to act as Mediator of this new covenant to make sure that none of these elect were lost. I think it is important to emphasize that unregenerate man has no way to access or communicate with God within himself (1 Corinthians 2:14): Adam took care of that. Thus, the only way the cleansing process (leading to salvation) can start is for God to initiate it: *"No one can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:"*(John 6:44).

The Lamb's Book of Life

Revelation 20:15 makes it clear that the Lamb's Book of Life is the Book in which God recorded all the names of those He chose to be with Him for eternity. Some believe that names are added to this Book as they come to believe in Christ, and this is used to justify their belief that men choose to accept Christ. I do not know of a scripture that makes this absolutely clear, but Reve-

lation 17:8 says, “*..they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life, from the foundation of the world, . . .*”. Versions of the Bible other than the KJV use different verbs in place of “*were,*” but they all include the phrase “*from the foundation of the world,*” which seems to make it clear that all the names of the elect were written there at that time, and at no other time. Further, there are no scriptures that mention adding names to the Book of Life, but there are several that refer (or imply) that names may be removed (see Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5; 22:19).

Some people believe that the Lamb’s Book of Life originally included the name of every person ever born on earth, and that God removes the names of those that reject Him. The Bible is not totally clear on this point, and there are other books mentioned in addition to the Lamb’s Book of Life; however, in view of Revelation 17:8, and other similar scriptures I believe that the Lamb’s Book of Life has always included the names of only those that God chose as His elect. It is certainly clear from Revelation 20:15, that the Book of Life ultimately (if not continuously), contained only the names of those elected to eternal life. To believe that God is nothing but a scribe in all of this, adding or erasing names as individuals make decisions, seems to lessen His majesty as Creator of the universe, and conflicts with His all seeing providence described

in Psalm 139. Further, it would seem strange for God to emphasize removing certain names from His book if it was commonly done for every non-believer.

Paul closes Chapter 8 with some of the most well-known passages in the Bible: *“If God be for us, who can be against us?” “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Calling of the Gentiles and Rejection of the Jews

Paul loved the Jews, who were his kinsmen according to the flesh. But he was greatly troubled and heavy hearted for the Israelites, to whom God had given adoption, glory, the covenants, the law, service to God, and the promises, and of whom Christ came, who is over all. But the present condition of Israel does not mean that the Word of God has failed. For not everyone from Israel is truly part of Israel; indeed not all the descendants are of the seed of Abraham. Even those that are seed of Abraham, unless they are seed of Isaac (Genesis 21:12), they are not called the seed of promise. Those who are the children of the flesh are not children of God: but the children of the promise are counted as seed. This is the word of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah: "*At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.*" And not only this; when Rebecca (Isaac's wife) bore him two sons, Jacob and Esau, before they had done any good or evil it was said unto her, the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob). *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* I believe it is correct to understand the word "hated," in this verse to mean "less regarded," and

not hated in the vernacular of the 21st century. This seems to be the common interpretation of most Bible expositors. Jacob, the twin that God chose, certainly required a lot of work in his own spiritual life before God could use him as the progenitor of the Jewish race.

What shall we say then? Is it unjust for God to do this? Heaven forbid! For He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Thus, it doesn't depend on human desires or efforts, but on God who shows mercy. And God has mercy on whom He wants and He hardens the hearts of whom He wants. You may wonder why He finds fault with us if we do not resist His will (purpose or desire). But who are you, a mere human being, to talk back to God?

This is undoubtedly one of the most difficult biblical teachings for believers to accept. Our concept of justice rebels at the thought that God would choose only some for salvation and leave the others, thus condemning them to eternal punishment and suffering. We refuse to accept the fact that God could act in a way that conflicts with our own sense of right and wrong. This is the problem addressed by Paul in Romans 9:18-21: *"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repli-*

est against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter the power [a right] over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour? God is the Creator of all men, but He is Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). God the Father administers justice with wisdom, kindness, mercy, and love far beyond our comprehension. As His children we must recognize His authority over us in everything.

Paul goes on to make this as clear as possible by using the example of a potter working with clay. *“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction: And that He might make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has called, not the Jews only, but also the Gentiles? As He said in Hosea, ‘I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved’”* (Isaiah 10:22-23; Hosea 2:23; Romans 9:21-25). This passage refers to both the remnant of the Jewish people that will be saved at the end, as well as believers (both Jews and Gentiles), that have joined Christ during rapture/resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Verse 28 describes the end in vivid terms: *“For He will finish the work*

[the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, finishing and cutting] (annihilating), and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Revelation 19:11-21).

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone." This introduces a difficult and controversial subject possibly best described in Hebrews 4:2, which says, *"For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it, For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said . . ."*

The best analysis of this I have found is from Matthew Henry's Commentary, quoted below:

Hebrews 4:1-10: "The privileges we have under the gospel, are greater than any had under the law of Moses, though the same gospel for substance was preached under both Testaments. There have been in all ages many unprofitable hearers; and unbelief is at the root of all unfruitfulness under the word. Faith in the hearer is the life of the word. But it is a painful consequence of partial neglect, and of a loose and wavering profession, that they often cause men to seem to come short. Let us then give diligence, that we may have a clear entrance into the kingdom

of God. As God finished his work, and then rested from it, so He will cause those who believe, to finish their work, and then to enjoy their rest. It is evident, that there is a more spiritual and excellent sabbath remaining for the people of God, than that of the seventh day, or that into which Joshua led the Jews. This rest is, a rest of grace, and comfort, and holiness, in the gospel state. And a rest in glory, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith, and the object of all their desires. The rest, or sabbatism, which is the subject of the apostle's reasoning, and as to which he concludes that it remains to be enjoyed, is undoubtedly the heavenly rest, which remains to the people of God, and is opposed to a state of labour and trouble in this world. It is the rest they shall obtain when the Lord Jesus shall appear from heaven. But those who do not believe, shall never enter into this spiritual rest, either of grace here or glory hereafter. God has always declared man's rest to be in him, and his love to be the only real happiness of the soul; and faith in his promises, through his Son, to be the only way of entering that rest.

Whosoever Shall Call Upon The Name of the Lord Shall Be Delivered

Paul cries out for his brothers for their salvation, for he knows of their zeal for God. But their zeal is not based on correct understanding. They are unaware of God's way of making people righteous, so they have established their own method based on law, and have not submitted themselves to God. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. Moses described a righteousness which is of the law, and stated that the man who is righteous by the law, must live by the law. But righteousness which is of faith does not need to bring Christ down from heaven, nor to bring Him up from the dead. It says the word is in your mouth and in your heart, if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile: for the same Lord is over all that call on Him: whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be

saved. But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe into Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Is it any wonder that all did not obey the gospel, for Isaiah 53:1 says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” Those who have heard our report, and to whom it was preached have not all obeyed the Gospel, for though ministers may rightly preach in the purity of it, yet there is no success without the power of God attending it: ministers may preach, and men may hear, and yet not obey the Gospel; that is, cordially embrace the doctrines, and sincerely submit to the ordinances of it. But isn’t it likely that they didn’t hear? Answer: The message has gone out throughout the whole world and the words to the ends of the earth. But wasn’t it because Israel didn’t understand? Answer: All day long I held out my hands to a people who kept disobeying and contradicting. I was found by those who were not looking for me, and I became known to those who did not ask for me. This last response has great meaning for me, for when the Lord appeared to me and six other men at a Methodist Men’s Retreat in 1963, I was not looking for Him; but He made Himself known to me (and the others), in a way that I had never experienced, and did not even believe possible.

There is a Remnant Of Israel That Will Be Saved

Paul denies that God has cast away his people, for he is an Israelite himself, of the seed of Abraham, and the tribe of Benjamin. He cites the experience of Elijah, when he pleaded with God about the sinfulness of Israel, how they had killed the prophets, and destroyed the altars of worship, and were now seeking his own life. God told Elijah that He had reserved seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knee to the image of Baal. God told Paul that He had also set aside a remnant of Israel, who would be saved according to the election of grace. *“Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace,”* (Romans 11:5). Also, see Romans 9:27, *“. . . Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant [it is the remnant that] shall be saved.”* God gave the Israelites a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this very day. Did they stumble so they would fall? God forbid: but through their falling away, salvation was given to the Gentiles to provoke the fallen Jews to jealousy. For if the fall of the Jews

led to reconciliation for the world, how much greater will be the benefit of the Jews acceptance of Christ: it will be life from the dead.

Paul has a warning for the Gentiles, as he is their appointed apostle. If the firstfruit is holy, so also is the whole loaf. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you (Gentiles), being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and became a partaker of the root and the fatness of the the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember it is not you that bears the root, but the root that bears you. You may claim that some of the branches were broken off so you could be grafted in. Not so, for they were broken off for unbelief, and you stand on the faith of God. Do not be high-minded, but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches, He certainly will not spare you. Behold the kindness and severity of God: on those that have fallen, severity; but on you, kindness--provided you maintain yourself in that kindness. Otherwise, you will also be cut off. And if the branches that were broken off do not continue in unbelief, they will be grafted back in. For if you are cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree. I want you to understand this mystery, lest you should be wise in your

own conceits; that blindness [a hardening] in part has befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles comes.

Romans 11:25 advises the Gentile believers of the saving of the Israelite remnant after the fulness of the Gentiles has been completed. There is an entire biblical history that builds up to the interpretations in these last few verses in Chapter 11, and we can only hope to provide a very sketchy analysis herein. I ask that readers consider the summary below carefully, and formulate your own conclusion about these important events. What is given here is a brief summary of events leading to the time “... *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*” I strongly encourage readers to check out the references, for they add considerable detail relative to the end of this present world, and the time Jesus Christ returns on His white horse to imprison the antichrist and his false prophet:

I. These events occur during a period of seven years described in the Book of Revelation, and also included in the prophecy of the Seventy Sevens, given to Daniel the prophet by the angel Gabriel, and recorded in Daniel 9:24-27:

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint

the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end shall be with a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the middle of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall [wrath] be poured upon the desolate."

That this passage refers to the antichrist can hardly be doubted due to the mention of the covenant made with many for seven years, and the subsequent breaking of the agreement in the middle of the seven year period, all documented in the Book of Revelation. The erection of the abomination of desolation (described in Revelation 13:14-15) is further evidence that this is the action of the antichrist at the middle of the seven year period.

2. A significant point in understanding the Book of Revelation is to recognize how God chose to organize the periods and events described therein. The book of God's judgment, which describes the judgments and wrath that will be

poured out on the earth during the last seven years, is sealed by seven seals (Revelation 5:1). The book of God's judgment is not opened until the seven seals are broken (Revelation 8:1). Opening of the first four seals presage a period of time referred to as the *beginning of sorrows* (Matthew 24:8).

The period known as the "*beginning of sorrows*" starts with the opening of the first seal, and it is described as being like a woman suffering the pains of childbirth. This is a 3 1/2-year period of time during which the antichrist rules the world, eventually bringing great persecution upon the Jewish nation, and believers throughout the world (Daniel 12:7). Delivery of the child (in this analogy), corresponds to the flight of the Jewish remnant into the wilderness (shortly after the mid-point of the seven-year period). There they are protected by God until they receive salvation (Revelation 12:6, 14). The woman, who represents Israel, is joyful after she has delivered the child, who represents the Jewish nation. This *delivery* marks the end of the travail (persecution) of the Jews.

3. The second period, known as the "*Great Tribulation*," is described in Matthew 24:4-8, and Revelation Chapters 8-11. This period begins at the middle of the seven year period and ends when God has removed His elect, just before His wrath is poured out and the end comes. Near the middle of the

seven years the antichrist turns on the Jews, and prohibits their worship. He erects an image of himself in the temple, and demands that all people on earth worship it on penalty of death. This is the “*abomination of desolation*,” referred to in Matthew 24:15.

Christ’s second coming (rapture/resurrection) is one of the most important and well-documented teachings of the Bible. The bridegroom’s coming for His bride is the first stage of His second coming, and it seems to be near the end of the “*Great Tribulation*,” when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet (Romans 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Revelation 10:7). The innumerable multitude from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, dressed in white robes and standing before the throne of God in Revelation 7:9, is none other than the raptured/resurrected church, who meet the Lord in the clouds, and return with Him to heaven, where He has prepared them a place.

This is a period of wars and rumors of wars, for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in various places. Many will be afflicted, and killed. Many shall stumble, hate, and betray one another. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. With the breaking of the seventh and last seal, God’s book is opened, and the last impediment to the outpouring

of His judgment will be removed. Chapters 8 through 11, describe the sounding of the seven trumpets, which release God's judgments during this period. When the seventh (final) trumpet begins to sound God sends His Son, Jesus Christ, to rapture/resurrect His elect from the earth (Romans 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Revelation 10:7).

4. The sixth seal sets the stage for "*The great day of the Lord's wrath*" (Revelation 6:16-17), when the sun will become black as sackcloth of hair, the moon will become blood, the stars will fall from heaven, and men will hide in the rocks of the mountains. The full force of God's wrath will be poured out after the seven angels are given golden vials containing God's wrath (Revelation 15:7). Several scriptures attest to the fact that the elect will be delivered from God's wrath, and that God will not pour out his wrath on those that belong to Him, but only on sinful men (Isaiah 13:9; Ezekiel 7:19; Nahum 1:2; John 3:36; Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9). Thus, we know that the great day of the Lord's wrath occurs after the rapture, after the church has been removed from earth. Revelation Chapters 15 and 16, describe the outpouring of these seven vials, which constitute the filling up or completion of God's wrath.

The book of Revelation is organized into periods identified by the **seven churches**, the **seven seals**, the **seven trumpets**, and the **seven vials**.

For a more complete description of this period of seven years see
[“A Layman’s Commentary on the Revelation of Jesus Christ” by Jesse](#)
[C. Jones available on scribd](#) **to read/download free and linked on the**
author’s website jessecjones.wordpress.com.

5. Romans 11:26 says, “*And so all Israel will be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*” Other scriptures state that only a remnant of the Jews will be saved (Zechariah 8:12; Revelation 12:17). Zechariah 13:8-9 adds further confusion, “*And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but a third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will bear them: I will say it is my people: and they shall say, the Lord is my God.*” I know that God does not sew confusion, so we need to recognize this as a description of the Jewish nation at different times, and thus, with a varying population.

The prophecy in Zechariah 13:8-9 relates to the end-times when Jerusalem is under seige, and we assume that Zechariah is comparing the number of Jews that are saved (1/3), to the number in Zechariah’s time (520 BC). The Roman 11:26 prophecy that says all Israel will be saved, so we know this refers to the time when Christ delivers all the Jewish remnant that escape the antichrist

into the wilderness (into the place where they are nourished for 3 1/2 years-see Revelation 12:13-17).

The Gifts of God

In this Chapter Paul beseeches believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. *“And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will (desire) of God.”* Do not think of yourself more highly than you should, but develop a sober estimate of yourself based on the trust God has invested in you. Resist the attraction of the world, tempting believers to become conformed its standards: instead, we are to be conformed to the image of Christ through sanctification.

The church is Christ’s body, and thus the church **is** Christ to our world. I refer to the church as God sees it: made up of committed believers everywhere, without regard to particular denominations or church organizations to which they may belong, or have membership. Ephesians 1:22-23 says that God the Father put all things under the feet of Christ, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body. Just as our head (brain/mind) controls all the actions of our body, in like manner Christ was designated by

the Father to be head over the church, and to control all its actions through members of the body. Colossians 1:18 says: *“And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have preeminence.”* A wonderful description of Christ’s mystical body is given in 1 Corinthians 12. Verses 13-14 say, *“For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.* There are no issues that should divide those that are in Christ’s body, for we are all led by the same Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s purposes within our church body. Our worship and fellowship will be blessed because of our unity in the Spirit.

The process of renewing your mind, referred to in Romans 12:2, is what God identifies as “sanctification,” in the Bible. Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26(b) gives us one of the first clues we get on this subject: both scriptures refer to taking away our *“stony heart,”* and replacing it with a heart of *“flesh.”* Other places in the Bible refer to individuals hardening their hearts, or having them hardened by God (Exodus 7:13, 8:15; 2 Chronicles 36:13; Job 9:4; Isaiah 63:17; Daniel 5:20; Mark 8:17; Hebrews 3:13). The sacrificial system in the OT was established by God so that priests could be *“sanctified”* by washing with water and sprinkling of blood before coming into His presence in the tabernacle: their sins and the evil

condition of their hearts had to be “covered” by the blood of sacrifice for their protection. Even the animal sacrifices brought by penitents seem symbolic of sanctification: the blood of the sacrifice proved that there was a death of something dear to the penitent, given to cover the sin of their heart. Mark 16:14 records the fact that it was unbelief, and hardness of hearts, that kept the disciples from believing that Jesus had risen. Romans 2:5 refers to hardness and impenitent hearts that treasure up wrath against the day of judgment. God loves those with a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17), and Isaiah 57:15 says that God revives the heart of the contrite ones. I believe this is what sanctification is all about, reviving hearts: “to bring (hearts) back to a healthy, vigorous, or flourishing condition after a decline” (Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language). The way God chose to accomplish this is through sanctification, renewing our minds (part of the Biblical heart), and He does this by removing the “hard” and “stony” places out of our hearts. These “hard” and “stony” places represent the thoughts, memories, and bad habits, stored in our mind before becoming believers that precipitate temptation from the lust of our eyes, the lust of our flesh, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Thus, sanctification is in reality the emptying of ourselves of all these things which impede the Holy Spirit’s working within us, so that when we meet King Jesus He will

say: “. . . Come, ye blessed my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me (Matthew 25:34-36).

The works we do in our lives will be tested by the refiner's fire to see if they are works of the Holy Spirit, or the works of man. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 says, *“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every [prove each] man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*

In Oswald Chamber's "My Utmost for His Highest" comments on 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, and says that "Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule us. Are we prepared for what it will cost? It will cost us everything that is not of God in us." On Hebrews 12:5, he says, "Sanctification is not my idea of what I want God to do for me; sanctification is God's idea of what He wants to do for me, and to get me into the attitude of mind and spirit where at any cost I will let Him sanctify me wholly." And on 2 Corinthians 10:5, "It is only when God has altered our disposition

and we have entered into the experience of sanctification that the fight begins. The warfare is not against sin; we can never fight against sin; Jesus Christ deals with sin in redemption. The conflict is along the line of turning our natural life into a spiritual life, and this is never done easily, nor does God intend it to be done easily. It is done only by a series of moral choices. God does not make us holy in the sense of character; He makes us holy in the sense of innocence, and we have to turn that innocence into moral character by a series of moral choices. These choices are continually in antagonism to the entrenchments of our natural life, the things that erect themselves as ramparts against the knowledge of God. We can either go back and make ourselves of no account in the Kingdom of God, or we can determinedly demolish these things and let Jesus bring another son to glory.”

When writing this I noted twenty-three important scriptures about sanctification. The one that arrested my attention to the greatest degree is Hebrews 12:14, which says: “*Follow peace with all men, and holiness [the sanctification], without which no man shall see the Lord.*” This seems to say that if believers do not enter into the process of sanctification to make their body holy and conformed to the image of Christ, they will not enter the kingdom of the Lord (see also 2 Corinthians 12:18; Ephesians 5:5; 2 Timothy 2:22).

Most believers would be surprised to hear that the various gifts, ministrations, and operations given to mankind include those bestowed by the three different entities of the triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 says, “*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences [diversities] of administrations [ministrations], but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations [workings], but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*” These various gifts, ministries, and endowments that these three categories include are listed below:

Charisma: The gifts of the Holy Spirit to believers are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and include the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. You will note that only nine gifts are listed here, seven of these are repeated in various forms in Romans 1:11, 11:29, 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7, 7:7; 2 Timothy 1:6; and 1 Peter 1:6.

Diakonos: This is a noun found in many different contexts meaning servant, minister, or deacon. It is used to describe one who serves or ministers as in Matthew 20:26, 23:11, and Mark 9:35, 10:43. It refers to servants as deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8, 12, and as deaconesses in Romans 16:1, 27, and as servants of the

church in Colossians 1:25 and 1 Timothy 4:6. In John 12:26; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 11:23; Ephesians 6:21; and Colossians 1:7 it refers to servants of Christ, and to servants of God in Romans 13:4; 2 Corinthians 6:4; and 1 Thessalonians 3:2. It also refers to ministers of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3:6, and as ministers of the gospel in Ephesians 3:7, and Colossians 1:23.

Energema: While the gifts referred to above are activated spiritually, and the ministries require a personal commitment. The Greek word “Energema” seems to refer to the actual power, or faith, to bring the contemplated gift into manifestation. Faith is the power of persuasion that generates the belief that we can do what God desires for the particular situation. Romans 12:3 seems to confirm that God provides the necessary faith to bring the gift or ministry into effect. Romans 12:3 KJV says, “*God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,*” however, the GNT says, “*God divided a measure of faith to each.*” The magnitude of the measure is seemingly determined by the particular spiritual gift or ministry operating within the body member: different gifts require different levels of faith, and the body member proves himself capable of doing God’s will through the renewing of his mind. As we grow in holiness by becoming more Christlike, God can trust us with ever greater spiritual authority. The remain-

ing verses in Chapter 12 provide guidance on how we should minister these gifts within the body of Christ.

Love Your Neighbor

Romans 13:1 introduces a very controversial subject, that of obeying higher powers (local, state, and federal government officials, teachers, supervisors, etc.), since there is no power but that of God: the powers that be are ordained by God. We immediately react to this guidance for we are aware of the many cases in which an individual in power does not follow God's guidance, nor do they act in the best interest of those who they govern. In studying what respected Bible expositors have written on this subject I was drawn to the following analysis adapted from Matthew Henry's Commentary on Romans: The grace of the gospel teaches us submission and quietude, whereas pride and the carnal mind encourage murmuring and discontent. Whatever a person's authority over us may be, it must be submitted to and obeyed as long as it is not contrary to God's word. In the general course of human affairs, rulers are not a terror to honest, quiet, and law abiding subjects, but to evil-doers. Such is the power of sin and corruption, that many will be kept back from crimes only by the fear of punishment. You have the benefit of the government, therefore do

what you can to preserve it, and nothing to disrupt it. Of course, in today's world we can work to make changes in our government through civic action. Individuals should behave quietly and peaceably where God has placed them (1 Timothy 2:1, 2). Christians must not use trickery or fraud. Smuggling, dealing in contraband goods, withholding or evading duties, is rebellion against the express command of God. Thus, when neighbors are robbed, who pays the most? Christians need to learn that the godly in the land will usually be found to be the quiet and the peaceable ones, whatever the others are.

I realize that the guidance recommended above would leave a lot of dissatisfaction among those being governed/supervised when the person in power seeks his own interests rather than the interests of those over which he has been empowered. I know of no cases in the Bible in which God encouraged the subjects of kings, rulers, priests, etc. to rebel against their failed rulers, in spite of the fact that there were many that did fail. Could it be that this is another case where we have taken over corrective action that should have been left to God? If so, I would consider the condition of our world today as evidence of a poor job on our part. Consider the many instances where we have removed God, or any influence related to Christianity, from institutions and ceremonies in our own land, and then evaluate the result. Compare that with

the many cases in the Bible where God applied the correction (Hopni and Phinehas, priests; king Saul; Haman, chief minister to the king; Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonian king; Pharaoh, of Egypt; Herod the great, king of Judah; and many more).

We have been adequately warned by the founders of our nation about this very thing. Time and time again these men spoke out about the danger of forgetting that only those nations whose God is the Lord are blessed. Noah Webster gave us this advice: “The moral principals and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.” We inherited a solid basis for governing our land, I believe our failure is that we have not insured that the beliefs of these great men continued to influence the thought and goals of our people today. The one exception might be the Constitution of the United States, but even that great document is under attack, and in some cases actually avoided when a way to do so can be found.

Paul continues this theme in verse 3, when he says that rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do that which is good, and you will have the

praise of those that rule, but if you do evil, be afraid, for the ruler is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon those that do evil. For this reason you should pay tribute, for they are God's ministers. Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loves another hath fulfilled the law.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbor therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time, to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day,, not in rioting [reveling] and drunken, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying [jealousy]. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

Do Not Judge Nor Condemn Your Brother

This chapter begins with the charge that a brother should not be condemned for having weak faith, but should be welcomed - but not to argue about different opinions. Although we have discussed this earlier, we need to understand the meaning of the word “faith” if we are to discuss its varying degrees, “weak” or “strong.” The word interpreted as “faith” in Romans 14:1, derives from a Greek word connoting persuasion, conviction, and commitment, and confidence. It comes from God, for Ephesians 2:8, says, *“For by grace you are saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves: it is a gift of God.**”* (emphasis added). Thus, I see “saving” faith as a force or power by which we are persuaded to believe and be saved, and it originates with God, not man. When the Word of God is mixed (or accompanied) by the power of faith it results in belief (Hebrews 4:2). Vincent’s Word Studies in the NT comments on Hebrews 11:1, says that faith apprehends as a real fact what is not revealed to the senses. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews

11:1). It is a real seeing, or belief, brought about by the power of faith from God.

I came to a new understanding about the meaning of faith in this study. I had always thought that faith was just another word for believing something as yet unproven, something that I had not yet seen with my own eyes. It is used in this way in many Bible scriptures, but it is so much more. I now recognize that it is an action word: it is the power that causes (persuades), me to believe, even though I have no proof through any of my senses (see, touch, smell, hear, or taste). I believe that I am an adopted son of God through His action of sending the gospel message into my heart via the power of faith. He may also need to remove a stone of disbelief from my heart (Ezekiel 36:26). Hebrews 4:2 says, “For unto us was the gospel preached as well as to them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Here the writer of the book of Hebrews is describing why some that hear the gospel message receive it and become believers, and others that hear the same message do not believe because they did not receive saving faith from God to validate the Word.

Paul applies this principal to such things as eating certain foods, and honoring one day above another. If we have given God control of our lives through

the Holy Spirit, we need to recognize that He will either guide, or approve, our decisions. If we act mistakenly on our own, the Holy Spirit may work to correct the mistake, or not, depending on its significance. 1 Peter 2:19-20 has an interesting side-note to this: “For this is thankworthy [acceptable], if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” God considers your heart in these tests, and He is looking for the one who takes wrongful grief patiently, just as our Savior Jesus Christ did in suffering for us: leaving an example who did not sin, nor was guile found in His mouth. He bore our sins in His own body on the cross, so that we, being dead to sins, should live in righteousness.

None of us lives unto ourselves, and no man dies unto himself. For if we live, we live unto the Lord, and if we die, we die we die unto the lord. To this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord of both those that live, and those that are dead. Why then do we judge, and criticize our brothers? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and each one will give an account of himself. We should not judge one another: but judge this instead: no man should put a stumbling block, or occasion to fall in his brother’s

way. There is nothing unclean of itself, but if a brother believes it to be unclean, then it is unclean to Him. The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. We should follow the things that make for peace, and things that edify others. It is good to neither eat meat nor to drink wine, nor anything that causes a brother to stumble. If you have been persuaded by God about these things, keep it between yourself and God, it is something you should not broadcast. But if you have doubts about whether it is right or wrong, do not partake: for if it is not of God's persuasion, it could cause your brother to stumble.

The Strong Must Bear the Infirmities of the Weak

In this Chapter Paul continues his instructions about the body of Christ.

The strong in the body must do what they can to bear the infirmities of their weaker brothers. And our motive must be to provide help to our brethren, not to satisfy ourselves. I can testify about the truth of this statement about motive from personal experience. Several years ago the church I attended became interested in operating a charitable clothing store for the needy within our church body, and for others living in that area in need. About the same time I had an urge from God that I needed to be more sensitive to the scripture in Matthew 25:32-46, that documents the time when king Jesus shall judge the nations. Verse 32 says, *“And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divided His sheep from the goats: and He sat the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed*

me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave ye drink? When saw we thee a stranger and we took thee in? or naked, and clothes thee? Or when we saw thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

My church decided against the clothes closet idea, so I decided that I had to do something to keep from being one of the goats in this scripture. I began to help a nearby charity that offered a wide variety of goods to the needy by using my pickup to collect donated items. I managed to get two of my friends from church to help, and we collected all kinds of appliances for the charity. After

about a year of doing this it struck me that I was doing a worthwhile task, but for all the wrong reasons. I was responding to the Word as law, and not of grace and love for the needy who were being served. About this same time my two helpers had to quit because all the heavy lifting was a little more than they were equipped to handle. With all the negative things that were happening I decided it was time for us to quit collecting donations. Several months later I had to be operated on to repair a hernia which I'm sure must have been caused, or exacerbated by the heavy lifting we were doing.

I learned (or relearned) several lessons from this experience:

1. God judges a man by his heart: we need to live our lives by following the guidance He provides through the Holy Spirit within (1 Samuel 16:7).
2. In making decisions like the one above, act only on getting the “green light” from God.
3. Every man's work will be made manifest. The only “good” works we can do are those that survive the refiner's fire (1 Corinthians 3:13-15), and this will be the ones He leads us into, or approves.
4. It is the “good” works of God that He has ordained (prepared), and we should walk in them.

5. Man is not justified by works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16).
6. God must sometimes teach us difficult lessons: especially when we have “big” stones in our hearts.

APPENDIX

Questions from the Book of Romans

Chapter 1

1. What does the phrase “made of the seed of David” mean?
2. Explain verse 17.
3. What is your understanding of verses 18-32.

Chapter 2

1. What does it mean when it says “there is no respect of persons with God.”
2. Explain verse 13.
3. Explain the confusion between circumcision vs. uncircumcision and the law.

Chapter 3

1. Explain verse 25. How do we maintain our forgiven status when we sin after we are saved?
2. Are we justified by faith, or by compliance with the law?
3. Explain verses 30 and 31.

Chapter 4

1. What is the message of verses 4 and 5?
2. Are today’s Christians sons of Abraham? Explain.
3. Was Isaac the only son born to Abraham after He was 100 years old?

Chapter 5

1. What does it mean to be justified by faith?
2. What does it mean to receive atonement?
3. Explain verses 17-18.

Chapter 6

1. How can we be buried with Christ and yet walk in newness of life?
2. If we are dead to sin why do we keep on sinning? And how can we stop?

Chapter 7

1. Can sin override our will? Explain verse 20.
2. Explain verse 25

Chapter 8

1. How can we know that we have received the Holy Spirit?
2. Explain verse 22.
3. How does the Spirit help us in determining how to pray?
4. Explain the meaning of verses 29-30.

Chapter 9

1. Explain verses 6 thru 8.
2. How can God love Jacob and hate Esau before they are born?
3. Explain verse 21.
4. Why did the Israelites fail to attain righteousness?

Chapter 10

1. Explain the difference between the righteousness of the law and that of faith.

Chapter 11

1. Explain the statement that God reserved 7,000 men who had not bowed their knee to an image of Baal (see verse 4).
2. Why did God turn to the Gentiles?
3. Explain verse 22.

Chapter 12

1. Explain verses 1 and 2, and their connection to sanctification (being made holy).
2. Can you identify the particular gift that God has given you?
3. Identify the various spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

Chapter 13

1. How should we interpret verses 1 thru 4 in today's world?
2. What kind of love is referred to in verse 10?
3. Explain verse 14.

Chapter 14

1. Explain verse 1.
2. In view of this chapter what day should we set aside to rest and to honor God?

Chapter 15

1. Explain verse 1.
2. Who is being referred to in verse 12?
3. Explain verse 20.

Chapter 16

1. What does the expression “. . . *mark them*. . .” in verse 17 mean?
2. Explain verse 19.

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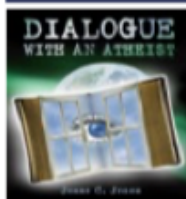


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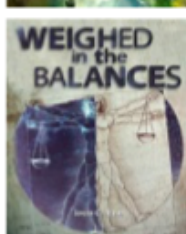
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