

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

UNDERSTANDING THE BACKGROUND OF PAUL'S LETTER: ROMANS 1:1-17

Introduction: *The book of Romans is regarded as the greatest of Paul's writings. The two greatest reformation leaders, William Tyndale and Martin Luther, called Romans "the chief book of the New Testament." R.C. Sproul said of this book, "We have the nearest thing to a systematic theology to be found anywhere in the New Testament."*¹ *It is believed that God has used Romans to change more lives than any other book in the New Testament. B.H. Carroll stated that "It is the most fundamental, vital, profound, and systematic discussion of the whole plan of salvation in all the literature of the world."*² *John Calvin said, "When anyone gains knowledge of this epistle, he has an entrance opened to him to all the most hidden treasures of Scripture."*³

Author: *The author of the book of Romans is the Apostle Paul. This is made clear in the letter by the fact that he identifies himself as Paul (1:1), he says he is from the tribe of Benjamin (11:1; Phil 3:5), and he refers to himself as the Apostle to the Gentiles (11:13; 15:16-19). This book clearly has the vocabulary, style, logic, and theological development of the Apostle Paul (see Rom. 3:20-22 and Gal. 2:16; Rom. 12:1 and I Cor. 12; Rom. 15:25-28 and 2 Cor. 8-9).*⁴ *He wrote this with the help of Tertius, according to Romans 16:22. Tertius wrote the letter in either long hand or short hand directly from Paul's dictation. Since writing a letter on papyrus was extremely difficult and slow with the pens available, it was necessary for Paul to use Tertius to help write this letter. Nonetheless, Tertius wrote down the exact thoughts that Paul expressed.*⁵

*Who was the Apostle Paul? The great preacher Donald Grey Barnhouse correctly comments, "It is impossible to understand the epistle (of Romans) without remembering ... the pit from which he (Paul) had digged. The Lord had taken him out of the miry clay and put his feet upon the rock, and for him all things were new."*⁶ *This realization is fundamental to understanding this book. In this book, Paul is not revealing information, but rather proclaiming truth that has transformed his own life. Paul (Roman name meaning "little"), whose real name is Saul (Jewish name meaning "asked of God") was born in Tarsus (Acts 9:11) around the same time as Jesus. Tarsus was known as a prosperous city, the center of Greek learning and culture, and home to one of the three most outstanding universities in the Roman Empire. Paul was trained under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) who was the grandson of Hillel, the most famous rabbi of all time. He had the best education possible in Greek literature, philosophy, and rabbinical law,⁷ and grew up with the renowned status of a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28). Philipians 3:5-6 tell us that Paul was "circumcised on the 8th day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless." Therefore, Paul, tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:3), had been completely committed to his religious beliefs and was recognized as the best and godliest among his peers (Gal. 1:14), having the*

¹ RC Sproul, 12

² Dr. Wong, 3

³ Mac x

⁴ Dr. Wong 4

⁵ Cranfield Vol 1 ~ 4 and 5

⁶ Barnhouse, 8

⁷ Mac, xiii

highest possible credentials of both the Greco-Roman and Jewish societies. Not having been an eyewitness of Jesus, he heard about Him through His converts, after His resurrection. Like all religious leaders, Paul shared a strong hatred for Jesus and His followers, deeply offended by the claims that Jesus was Israel's Messiah. In his view, Jesus and His followers were heretics that needed to be stopped. As a result, he "began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison" (Acts 8:3) and "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). It is important to note that Paul was the leader responsible for the death of Stephen recorded in Acts 7. According to his own words in Galatians 1:13, he "persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it." However, according to Acts 9 (See also 1 Tim. 1:13-14), Paul was radically and miraculously saved by Jesus's personal appearance to him on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-31) by God's mercy and grace. Immediately after his conversion, "he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues" of Damascus. From this point forward, Paul became an incredible tool for the gospel. His influence became a great threat to the unbelieving Jewish community to the point that his former friends sought to kill him (2 Cor. 11:32; Acts 9:24-25). Shortly after his conversion, he went to Arabia for three years where he was taught by God (Gal. 1:11-18). Later, after going back to Damascus for a short time (Gal. 1:17), he spent three years with the other apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). In Acts 13:1-3, Paul is "set apart" by the Holy Spirit to be an Apostle to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:9; Gal. 1:1; Acts 26:15-18; 2 Cor. 12:12). He wrote at least 13 of the 21 letters of the New Testament. Nine of these letters were addressed to Gentile churches and the other four were addressed to individuals.⁸ History informs us that Paul was executed in Rome in A.D. 67

About the intended audience: According to Romans 1:7, this letter was addressed to the God-beloved saints (Christians) in Rome. Since neither Paul nor Peter had been to Rome, these believers were either directly or indirectly a result of Paul and Peter's ministry around the Mediterranean world. It is clear that Peter did not start the church in Rome, as the Catholic Church believes, since Peter was in Jerusalem till at least A.D. 49 (Acts 15) and Paul never makes mention of Peter in his letter. Evidence shows that Peter did not arrive in Rome until around A.D. 63 (1 Pet. 5:13). It is clear from Acts 2:10 that some of these believers were visitors from Rome to Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Rome was the largest and most powerful city in the world at the time, so it was extremely important! In many regards, it was the business capital of the world. Therefore, it had a lot of wealth, poverty, capitalism, slavery, citizens, foreigners, worldliness, and religions. Interestingly, Paul's epistle to the Romans is the earliest witness to the existence of a church in Rome. Since Paul says that he had desired to come to Rome for a long time to visit the believers there, it is clear that there had been Christians in Rome for a long time (Rom. 15:23; 1:13).⁹ The church in Rome was probably made up of mostly Gentiles with a small group of Jewish believers (Rom. 1:6, 13; 4:1; 11:13-32; 15:7-12; chapter 16; and 18:2) from all different social statuses. Most likely, the letter was written to small congregations in Rome and not just one church (16:5, 10, 11, 14, 15).¹⁰

Date and place of the writing of Romans: Romans 15:25 states that the time of writing the book of Romans is when Paul is preparing to go to Jerusalem. Furthermore, Romans 15:19 and 23 make it clear that Paul's writing was at the end of his pioneer missionary work (or the end of his third missionary journey). According to Romans 1:10-13 and 15:22-28, although Paul had desired to go to Rome for a long time, he had not been able thus far. However, he planned to go on his way to Spain, after he went to

⁸ Jenson 240

⁹ Cranfield, 16

¹⁰ Cranfield, 16-22

Jerusalem with money he had collected for the poor saints (Acts 20:7,16). Consequently, Bible scholars believe that the book of Romans was written during Paul's three months in Greece [based off of the details in the letter (Rom. 16:1, 23 and 1Cor. 1:14)]. Most likely, this letter was written in the city of Corinth as Acts 20:2-3 records.¹¹ This means that this letter was written in either winter or early spring of AD 55 or 56.

Background or purpose of the letter: *The primary purpose of the book of Romans is to provide a clear presentation of the good news of Christ's righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17). This was very important for Paul to communicate! This message was the overflow of all his years of ministry to these people. Having preached the gospel for over 20 years throughout the Mediterranean world, it was time for him to set forth an orderly presentation of the gospel to a strategically significant place like Rome. It was this message that Paul was obligated before God to preach (Rom. 1:14).*

Paul's second purpose in writing Romans was to warn the Romans from false teachers (Rom. 16:17-20). Since Satan and his followers were on a mission to destroy the works of God, Paul was certain that false teachers would seek to hinder God's church in Rome. This letter would be critical to help the church withstand such false teachers.

Paul's third purpose in writing Romans was to let the Romans know of his love for them and his plans to visit them, so that they could be prepared for his coming (Rom. 16:1,2). Since Paul had heard that Phoebe was planning on visiting Rome, he saw this as a great opportunity to communicate his future plans to visit.

Paul's fourth purpose in writing Romans was for support (Rom. 15:22-33). The support for which Paul was seeking is not completely clear, but Romans 15:30-33 does reveal that he desired prayer support. However, Paul in Romans 15:24 seems to be seeking further help beyond just prayer. The support might be for someone to accompany him, to provide protection, to provide knowledge of Spain, or to provide a place to stay. Regardless of what Paul is specifically asking for, he is hoping to enjoy fellowship.

The flow of Romans: *The first eight chapters of the book of Romans can be broken up into eight sections which all support the primary purpose: the good news of Christ's righteousness. The first section (1:1-1:17) introduces the theme of Christ's righteousness. The second section (1:18-3:20) expresses man's need for Christ's righteousness. The third section (3:21-26) unfolds the good news of Christ's righteousness. The fourth section reveals the Christian's response to the good news of God's righteousness (3:27-4:25). The fifth section (5:1-21) unfolds the practical and theological results of God's righteousness. The sixth (6:1-23) and seventh sections (7:1-25) deal with two questions that arise out of the goodness of God's righteousness, namely God's righteousness and its relationship to sin and the Law. The final section returns to the topic of chapter five regarding the results of God's righteousness (8:1-39).*

BIBLE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS

UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE OF PAUL'S INTRODUCTION: ROMANS 1:1-17

¹¹ Cranfield, 12

It has often been said that if you want to make a lasting impact for centuries, you must learn to write. One incredible example of the truth of this statement is the book of Romans. A thousand years after Paul penned this letter, lives are still being powerfully changed by its truths. What is interesting is that all that Paul wrote was a letter. Okay, it was God's very word through Paul, but it was still through a simple Greek-styled letter. Just like any letter, Paul's letter had a purpose, a clear flow of thought, and a formal Greek format. As with any Greek letter, Paul's introduction to the Romans consisted of four parts: one, an introduction of the writer (1:1-6); two, an introduction of the recipients (1:7); three, a formal statement of greeting (1:7); and four, a prayer to God (1:8-10). Although Paul uses a formal Greek format in his introduction, the character and content of his letter are far from standard. In an incredible way, Paul modifies and expands the normal Greek introduction to be Christianized and biblical in nature. For example, a normal Greek letter would thank their false Greek gods, but Paul thanks the one and true God. Furthermore, Paul's introduction goes beyond a normal Greek format in that after his prayer to God, he passionately affirms his readers of his deep love and desire to come to visit them (1:11-16), culminating in a glorious thesis statement that sets the tone for his whole letter (1:17). Paul's introduction is passionate, deep, intriguing, insightful, and pastoral – a perfect beginning to a life-changing book.

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGE OF PAUL'S INTRODUCTION: ROMANS 1:1-7

Out of all of Paul's twelve New Testament letters, Romans is the most unique. It is not unique in format, for all of Paul's letters introduce himself (1:1-6), his recipients (1:7a), and his greetings (1:7b), but it is unique in length. In none of Paul's other letters does he take six verses to introduce himself. However, in no other letter did he and his readers know so little about one another either. Therefore, within Paul's introduction of himself (1:1), he feels the need to define his message (1:1-3) and the person of His message, Jesus Christ (1:3-6). Paul's lengthy introduction gives his readers great insight into who he is, what his message is about, and the nature of his calling. In this introduction of himself, Paul sets forth a beautiful depiction of both the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ. In contrast to his unique personal introduction, he keeps the introduction of his recipients and his greeting very standard. Although these seven verses are only part of Paul's formal introduction, they contain the rich content that is characteristic of this whole letter.

UNDERSTANDING THE OUTLINE OF PAUL'S INTRODUCTION: ROMANS 1:1-7

I) Introduction: Author, Recipients, Greetings, Prayer (1:1-17)

A) Paul's introduction of himself as God's Messenger (1:1-6)

- 1) Paul's description of himself (1:1)
 - (a) A bond-servant of Jesus Christ (1:1)
 - (b) Called to be an apostle (1:1)
 - (c) Set apart as a minister of the gospel (1:1)
- 2) Paul's description of his message ~ The gospel (1:1-3)
 - (a) Which belongs to God (1:1-3)
 - (b) Which was not new but promised in the Old Testament (1:2)
 - (c) Which was about God's Son ~ Jesus Christ (1:3)
- 3) Paul's description of Jesus Christ (1:3-6)
 - (a) He was born as a descendant of King David (1:3)
 - (b) He was declared to be Son of God (1:4)

- (c) He gave Paul grace and apostleship (1:5-6)
 - (i) To bring about obedience of faith (1:5)
 - (ii) To minister among the gentiles (1:6)
 - (iii) To make God's name known (1:6)
- B) Paul's introduction of his recipients (1:7)
 - 1) The beloved of God in Rome (1:7)
 - 2) The called saints (holy ones) in Rome (1:7)
- C) Paul's introductory greeting (1:7)
 - 1) Grace from God
 - 2) Peace from God

DIGGING INTO THE HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In verse 1, what three descriptions does Paul give about himself?
2. What do you think is a bond-servant?
3. According to verses 1-3, what three attributes does Paul give for the Gospel (Good News)?
4. What two descriptions does Paul give for God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord in verses 3 & 4?
5. In verse 4, what three names are given for the Son?
6. What do you think is so important about the relationship between David and Jesus?
7. What event declared (or appointed) Jesus to be the Son of God?
8. What two things did Paul receive from Jesus, according to verse 5?
9. For what purpose was Paul called to be an apostle (v.5)?
10. According to verse 6, who are the Roman believers?
11. What two descriptions does Paul give to those to whom he is addressing in verse 7?

12. What two things does Paul wish on the Romans in his greeting?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

What does it mean to be a bond-slave of Jesus? The term refers to a slave (a Christian) owned by a master (Christ). This has its roots in the economic system of the Mosaic Law. When you understand this term in context, you realize that Paul is meaning more than just being a servant of Christ, because a bond-servant had a special relationship to his master. In the days of Moses, one primary reason people became slaves was due to unpayable debt. However, according to the law of God given to Moses, a Hebrew slave after working 6 years was allowed to “go out as a free man without payment” (Ex. 21:2), unless he decided to become a bond servant. A bond-servant was one who said, “I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out as a free man...Then his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently” (Ex. 21:5-6). Therefore, by this term Paul is expressing the total belongingness, total allegiance, total service, and absolute ownership and authority given to his master Jesus Christ as a result of his endearing love.¹² The writer Frances Havergal captures it properly in his hymn:

*“I love, I love my Master,
I will not go out free,
For He is my Redeemer;
He paid the price for me.
I would not leave His service
It is so sweet and blest;
And in the weariest moments
He gives the truest rest.”¹³*

Paul begins his letter by designating himself to this special and joyful office of slavery to Christ (Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; James 1:1-2; 2 Pet. 1:1).

In what sense were Paul and the Romans called? The word *called* (which is used in verses 1, 6 and 7), expresses divine calling, as opposed to human self-appointment. It is the same idea that was used for the calling of a prophet (Isa. 49:1) and Israel to be God’s special people. Paul’s calling was unique in that he received his calling to salvation and more specifically to the office as an apostle directly from Jesus Himself (Gal.1:1; Acts 26:15-18). The calling by Christ to the Roman Christian (as well as any Christian) is to be a saint or “holy one.”

¹² Cranfield, 50,51

¹³ Barnhouse pg.9

To whose gospel is Paul set apart? It is important to note that all Christians are not called to preach their own gospel, but rather the gospel that belongs to God. The source of the Good News is none other than God Himself. If the gospel belongs to God, we must be very careful to treat it with great care. Donald Barnhouse says, “It is the good news of God. Stop and think. It is God who is our Creator, and against whom we have sinned. Yet He brings us good news.”¹⁴

Why does Paul refer to Jesus as “the Son”? Paul’s use of the term “Son” (used only 17 times by Paul) is to bring reference to the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Jesus. The Old Testament spoke of a future coming “Son” from the line of David who would reign over the line of David forever; Jesus claimed to be that Christ or Messiah King (See: Ps 2:7-9; 2 Samuel 7:14; Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Matt. 1:1-17; Gal. 4:4).

What does Paul mean by verse four when he says the Son “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord?” This is a complicated but glorious verse! There are three aspects that should be noted. First of all, the Son is appointed, not declared. This word is better translated as *appointed* according to Greek scholar Douglas Moo since “the verb does not appear to have this meaning [“declared”] in first-century Greek.” In its seven NT occurrences, the verb means to “determine, appoint, or fix”.¹⁵ Secondly, this appointment was from one position of status to another.¹⁶ The text reads that the Son (v.3) who came in the flesh as Messiah was appointed to a new position as the Son of God “in power” (v.4), given the title “Jesus Christ our Lord.” Throughout eternity Jesus has always been revealed in Scripture to be “the Son”. However, when He came to us in His humanity (“according to the flesh”) he took the status of the Son who was “from the seed of David.” Yet, after He was resurrected from the dead (according to the Spirit of Holiness), He took on a new status as the Son “in power.” Thirdly, we see that it was God the Father who gave Jesus this new status. The verb “appointed” is in the passive verb tense, meaning that Jesus did not appoint Himself but was appointed by someone else, namely God the Father. Therefore, this verse is saying the exact same thing as Philippians 2:9-11: “God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those who are in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” (See also Acts 2:31-36)

For what purpose was Paul called to be an Apostle? According to verse 5, it was for two purposes. One, “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.” Two, it was for “His [Jesus Christ’s] name sake.” Paul’s aim in his preaching his audience’s true obedience to God (v. 5). Ultimately, this is responding to Jesus’s message of Good News by faith. God-given faith (Eph. 2:10, Heb. 12:1) by its very nature includes the sincere desire and will to obey God in all things. This obedient faith would thus bring about the glory of Christ’s name.

(I brought this up from below) In what sense are the Romans (and all Christians) “saints”, who are “beloved of God”? The word “saints” means “holy ones.” These “holy ones” are given this status as a result of God’s gracious choice to love and draw His chosen ones to Himself. To be “beloved of God” means that one is a special object of God’s affection (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). This is the same word God gives to His son Jesus (Matt. 3:17) and to the nation of Israel (Ex. 4:22). Therefore, Paul is

¹⁴ Barnhouse pg.9

¹⁵ Moo, 47 : Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26,31; Heb 4:7

¹⁶ Moo, 48

saying that God has set the Romans (indirectly all Christians) apart in a special way and loved them in the same way that the Father loved His own Son Jesus Christ.¹⁷

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES OF PAUL'S INTRODUCTION: ROMANS 1:8-17

There is a saying within Christian circles today that says, "People do not care about how much you know, until they know how much you care." Based on how Paul starts out his letter, it seems that he would affirm the truth of that Christian saying. However, rather than jumping quickly into the content of his letter, Paul spends eight verses (1:8-16) expressing his love, concern, and desire to visit the people of Rome. Paul's love and concern is seen in three different ways.

The first way: *The first way Paul's love is seen is through his prayer for the Romans (1:8-10). In verse 8, he continues with a formal Greek introduction by giving a prayer of thanksgiving. As stated above, his prayer of thanksgiving is not to the gods, as was customary for the Greek world, but rather a prayer to the one, true, living God. Paul's prayer of thanksgiving is for the faith of the Romans, a faith that is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. It leads him to express a prayer of petition (in verses 9-10) that clearly makes known his love for the Romans. Paul passionately exclaims how he is praying continuously that he might at last be permitted to come and visit the Romans. He so earnestly wants these people to be confident of his loving desire to come that he even calls God to witness the truthfulness of his statement.*

The second way: *The second way Paul's love is seen is through his expressed longing to visit the Romans (1:11-12). Upon mentioning his continual prayers to see them, Paul conveys his love in verses 11-12 by stating his longing to come visit (11a) and the motivation behind his desire to come (1:11b-12).*

The third way: *The third way Paul's love is seen is through his desire to inform the Romans of his longing to come and visit (1:13-17). Paul makes sure they are not unaware of his past plans to come visit (1:13-14) and his unashamed eagerness to come and be with them (1:15-17). Within this little section, we really hear the heart of Paul and his love for people! We observe several reasons for why he wants to see the Romans: to impart his spiritual gift, to bear fruit, to fulfill his obligation to them and God, to be encouraged by one another's faith, and so they might receive the gospel.*

The most important verses within this section are verses 16 and 17, because they provide Paul's thesis statement which will guide his thoughts throughout the remainder of the letter and will provide a transition from the introduction to the main body of the letter. This thesis statement is "The righteous man shall live by faith." However, in context, these verses (1:16-17) serve to explain how Paul eagerly desires to preach the Gospel in Rome, in light of its status as the imperial city. In verse 16, Paul testifies to why he is in no way ashamed of the Gospel. Even though there would be a great temptation to not be bold, Paul must not be ashamed because the gospel contains God's power to bring about salvation. In verse 17, Paul proclaims why the gospel is able to bring salvation to all who believe – in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. He says that it is in this good news that a righteous status (not a status earned by man but rather provided to us as a gift from God) is revealed and provided to all who place their faith in the person and provision of Jesus Christ (1:17a).¹⁸ Faith in the good news of this gift of righteousness results in a future eternal life with God (1:17b). In these two verses, Paul wants to make it very clear to his readers that this good news contains within it God's power... a power that is necessary

¹⁷ RC Sproul, 23

¹⁸ Cranfield, 89

for mankind, because it is the only power capable of delivering mankind from sin's grip, condemnation, and consequences (God's coming wrath). These two verses should be slowly meditated on and rejoiced in.

UNDERSTANDING THE OUTLINE OF PAUL'S INTRODUCTION:

I) Introduction: Author, Recipients, Greetings, Prayer (1:1-17)

- D) Paul's introductory prayer to the one and only God (1:8-10)
 - 1) Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for the proclaimed faith of the Romans (1:8)
 - 2) Paul's prayer of petition that he might be able to visit the Romans (1:9-10)
- E) Paul's introductory comments of love, affirming his desire to come visit the Romans (1:11-17)
 - 1) Paul's love expressed by his longing to come visit the Romans (1:11-12)
 - (a) Paul's longing to visit expressed: "For I long to see you." (1:11a)
 - (i) The purpose of Paul's longing to visit explained (1:11b)
 - 1. Paul longs to establish them in the faith through his spiritual gift (1:11b)
 - 2. Paul longs to be mutually encouraged by each others faith (1:12)
 - (ii) Paul's love expressed by his concern that the Romans are not unaware (1:13-17)
 - (a) Paul wants the Romans to not be unaware of his previous plan to come visit (1:13)
 - (i) Paul's plan (although unsuccessful) explained: "Often I planned to come to you" (1:13a)
 - (ii) Paul's purpose behind his previously planned visit expressed: "So that I may gain some fruit among you." (1:13b)
 - (iii) Paul's motivation behind his previously planned visit elaborated: "I am under obligation..." (1:14)
 - (b) Paul wants the Romans to not be unaware of his unashamed eagerness to visit (1:15-17)
 - (i) Paul's eagerness to visit expressed: "I am eager to preach the gospel" (1:15)
 - (ii) Paul's eagerness to visit explained: "For I am unashamed of the Gospel" (1:16a)
 - 1. Paul's being unashamed of the gospel explained: For the Gospel is the power of God for salvation (1:16b)
 - a. The gospel ability to provide salvation explained: For in the gospel the righteousness of Christ is revealed by faith (1:17a)
 - i. The gospel ability to provide salvation proven (Paul's thesis statement): "For as it is written, the righteous man shall live by faith" (1:17b)

DIGGING INTO THE HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. Through whom does Paul thank God, according to verse 8?
2. What is the source of Paul's thanksgiving?
3. Why do you think Paul thanks God for the faith of the Romans?
4. Who does Paul call as a witness to the fact that he prays for the Romans?

5. How often does Paul say that he prays for the Romans?
6. What request does Paul make of God in verse 10?
7. What do you think can be learned by the statement, “if the Lord wills”?
8. What two motivations does Paul give behind his desire to see the Romans in verses 11 and 12?
9. What is one word that describes what Paul expects to receive from being with the Romans?
10. What do you think Paul means as he says the words, “I don’t want you to be unaware brethren”?
11. Why had Paul not come to Rome as of yet, according to verse 13?
12. In verse 13, what does Paul say as to why he wants to go to Rome?
13. Why do you think Paul is under obligation to the Greeks and barbarians?
14. Why is Paul so eager to go to Rome, according to verse 14 and 15?
15. What reason does Paul give for why he is unashamed of preaching the gospel?
16. What do you think Paul means when he says the gospel “is the power of God for salvation”?
17. According to verse 16, who are those that are saved?
18. Why do you think salvation is for the Jew first and then to the Greek?
19. How is the righteousness of God revealed according to verse 17?
20. What do you think is so important about the righteousness of God being revealed?

21. What hope does the end of verse 17 give for those who by faith have been made righteous?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

Why do you think Paul is so eager to make it known that He wants to come to visit the Romans? Paul wants the Romans to know that he wholeheartedly desires to come to them. This is clear throughout this whole section by the strong language of “for God is my witness”, “unceasingly”, “now”, “at last”, “by the will of God”, “I don’t want you to be unaware”, etc. Paul does not tell us directly why he is so passionate to affirm within their minds his desire to come. But from the content of this section, it indirectly seems that there may be people in the church who think that Paul does not care about them (v.13) or is fearful (v.16) of coming to them. He goes to great lengths to prove his love, giving us insight into his heart for ministry.

What can be learned from Paul's heart in this section? There are five things that can be noted in this section. Firstly, Paul is committed to praying for his people. Paul says, “I make mention of you, always in my prayers” (v.9). Prayer is probably the greatest act of love one could ever express, because it takes a sacrifice that calls for the greatest assistance, but brings with it the least recognition. But if we are going to love people, we are going to faithfully pray for them. Secondly, Paul longs to minister to people. He says, “For I long to see you” (v.11). The object of Paul’s affection is people! Paul passion is not a program, a position, or pay ~ it is people! Thirdly, Paul had a plan: “Often I have planned to come to you” (v.13). He makes it known that he is not just sitting around and waiting for God to lead him to his next step; he has made a plan and is pushing to carry it out as he prayerfully waits to see if God wants to redirect him. As one looks at the book of Acts it is clear by Paul’s three missionary journeys that he had a plan. Clearly, without a plan Paul would have never had the unbelievable impact that he had. Fourthly, Paul lived under daily obligation before God to fulfill his ministry. Paul said, “I am under obligation” (v.14). This obligation to all men (Greek and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish) was to preach the gospel. Since God called him to “bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles” (v.5), Paul could not rest until all the Gentiles had heard his message. What has God called each of us to accomplish? Do we live under obligation to our commander and chief, Jesus Christ to report at the end of our service, “mission accomplished”? Lastly, Paul was eager and unashamed to make Christ known. He says, “I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am unashamed of the gospel.” The idea here is that Paul is unashamedly looking for any opportunity he can find to insert the gospel into the lives of others. If we are going to have an impact in the lives of others, we too need to surrender our lives to pray, to love, to plan, to be obligated, and to be eagerly unashamed of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

What do we learn about Paul's service in verse 9? Paul tells us that his service was from his spirit. What he is saying is that his service "was the engagement of Paul's deepest person."¹⁹ He did not serve half-heartedly but with all his being, as an expression of his worshipful gratitude to God.

From what exactly is the Gospel of God's power saving you? The salvation that Paul is mentioning is a salvation from sin's guilt (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), from sin's pollution (Rom. 6:6, 17; 7:21-25a), from sin's slavery (Rom. 7:24, 25; Gal. 5:1), from separation from God's presence (Eph. 2:12), from God's wrath (Eph. 2:3), and from God's eternal hell (Eph. 2:5, 6). This salvation brings about God's righteousness (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1), man's obedience (Rom. 6:1-4; 12:1-2), man's freedom (Gal. 5:1, II Cor. 3:17) and man's blessing (Eph. 2:13; Rom. 5:5; Eph. 1:5; Col. 3:1-4).²⁰ Salvation means, then, to be emancipated from the greatest evil, and to be placed in possession of the greatest good.²¹

What is this faith that is talked about in verses 16 and 17? The faith spoken of here is not a result of man's goodness (Rom. 3:21, 22, 28; 4:2-5; 9:32; Gal. 2:16; 3:2-5) but rather a result of God's power at work in changing hopeless man. This faith is a result of man's openness to the Gospel which God created, the human response of surrender to the unmerited mercy of God which God Himself brings about. God is the one who both directs the message to the hearer and also opens the hearer's heart to the message. It should also be understood that God sustains that faith until its heavenly completion. It is not a response by man based off his claim on God by virtue of something good in himself. Nonetheless, it is a God-authored response by man brought about by God's power working through the good news of the gospel.²² One man explained faith as follows, "It is trust, confidence, leaning on the everlasting arms, the conviction (Heb. 11:1) that through Christ and His atoning sacrifice, my sins are forgiven, my debt is canceled; and that I am now adopted as a child of the King. It is the sinner's empty hand stretched out to God, the giver."²³

What is this righteousness which is of God? The understanding of this phrase is very important. It is used twice in verse 17, and it is foundational to understanding Paul's letter to the Romans. As you will see, the righteousness of God is Paul's central theme in his letter. The word *righteousness* comes from the Hebrew language. Cranfield, a great Bible scholar, says these words in Hebrew mean: (1) "to be just" or "to be righteous" (Job 35:7; Ps. 19:9; 51:4), (2) "to be in the right" in the sense of having a just cause (Gen. 38:26), (3) "to be justified or to be declared righteous (Ps. 143:2; Isa. 43:26), (4) "justify," "declare righteous" or "acquit" (Ex. 23:7; Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15), (5) the righteous status given, and (6) righteous acts (whether of God or of man).²⁴ The message that Paul is communicating by this word is the amazing truth that man by faith is "acquitted" or "conferred as having a righteous status." Paul is saying that a person will live (eternally) because he is given a status of righteousness by God through faith. Martin Luther, the great reformer, said, "For God does not want to save us by our own but by an extraneous (an unrelated) righteousness, one that does not originate (begin) in ourselves but comes to us from beyond ourselves, which does not arise on earth

¹⁹ Moo, 58

²⁰ Hendriksen, 60

²¹ Hendriksen, 60

²² Cranfield, 90

²³ Hendriksen, 61

²⁴ Cranfield 94

but comes from heaven.”²⁵ Paul in Philippians 3:1-14 gives an extensive testimony of how he came to understand God’s righteousness.

What is Paul’s meaning of “from faith to faith”? This phrase is a rhetorical (symbolic or non-literal) formulation to emphatically express “by faith.” Paul is saying that the foundation and goal of the righteousness of God is faith.²⁶ That is why in the next verse he says, “the righteous man shall live **by faith.**” Douglas Moo says, “The combination is rhetorical and is intended to emphasize that faith and “nothing but faith” can put us into a right relationship with God.”²⁷

UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE OF PAUL’S MESSAGE: ROMANS 1:18-3:20

When a person writes a dissertation or an essay, typically a thesis statement is provided. The thesis statement serves to guide the reader to clearly understand the goal of the author. After the thesis statement is made, the author uses the remaining paragraphs to prove or explain the validity of the thesis. This is precisely what Paul does for his readers in the book of Romans. Paul’s thesis statement is provided in 1:17, when he says, “the righteous shall live by faith.” Then, in the following sections 1:18-32, 2:1-3:8, 3:9-20, 3:21-3:26, and 3:27-4:25 Paul proves and explains his thesis statement.

Paul’s answer to the question, *why is it that only the righteousness man shall live (eternally) by faith?* is lengthy but clear and powerful. His answer is broken down into several smaller messages adding up to one immense, masterful dissertation. The first major portion of this dissertation is the understanding of mankind’s unrighteous and hopeless inability to save himself. Paul starts with building this understanding within the minds of his readers because he wants to show them that they are in need of a righteousness that is outside of themselves. Then, in 3:21-26, Paul is going to reveal a righteousness which is outside of mankind. Lastly, Paul is going to reveal how this righteousness is able to be obtained (3:27-4:25).

This first major portion of the dissertation (1:18-3:20) can be broken down into three major sections, each containing several little messages. One, all non-religious mankind is unrighteous and condemned, suppressing the truth they know about God (1:18-32). Two, all religious mankind is unrighteous and condemned, suppressing the truth they know about God (2:1-3:8). Three, all mankind is unrighteous, condemned, and hopeless because of sin’s devastating effects (3:9-20).

This whole section (1:18-3:20) is a very dark but true picture of mankind from the viewpoint of God Himself. It uncovers the innermost truth about the heart of every person who has ever lived. However, it is only through this dark journey into the recognition of the inner-self that one is able to find the light of hope, which Jesus Christ has unbelievably provided. By the grace of God, may each soul that earnestly travels down Paul’s journey see these precious truths for himself and come away transformed, set free, and righteous. May God open the eyes of our hearts!

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 1:18-32

²⁵ Martin Luther, Lectures on Romans, tr. of Romerbriefvorlesung (Vol. 56 of the Weiar edition of Luther’s Works), Philadelphia, 1961, pp. 3,4.

²⁶ Cranfield 100

²⁷ Moo pg.76

There are many important words within the book of Romans, one of which is the very first word in verse 18 – the word “for.” The word reveals that Paul’s previous message in 1:8-17 is connected to his coming message 1:18 and following. The “for” in the Greek language most often functions to alarm the reader that the writer is going to give an explanation. Specifically, this for here provides the reader with an explanation of why it is that only the righteous man shall live (eternally) by faith, connecting the reader back to Paul’s thesis statement of “the righteous man shall live by faith.” The “for” indicates the start of Paul’s great articulation of how a righteous man can live eternally by faith.

The current section (1:18-32) is Paul’s first line of reasoning to support his thesis statement. He establishes the fact that the non-religious are unrighteous and condemned because of their suppression of the truth they know about God. (At first glance it is hard to know why we would say that Paul is addressing the non-religious, since he plainly says all mankind. However, as one follows his whole argument it seems best to see these people as the non-religious or Gentiles of Paul’s day. The source of these people’s knowledge of God comes through a general means of creation and not a special way as it was for the Jews, through the Law.) This section can be broken into four major units of thought establishing four facts. One, God has clearly revealed Himself to all mankind. Two, mankind is continuously rejecting God’s revelation. Three, God is judging mankind for their rejection of Him as their authoritative King. Lastly, when mankind sins and encourages others to sin, he does so with full knowledge of God’s demands and judgments.

The first fact: *The first fact of God’s clear revelation of Himself is established in 1:18-20. He establishes this fact by declaring the reality that God is continuously and clearly revealing Himself to mankind (present tense) in 1:18. However, Paul feels the need to more precisely clarify his statement so he provides more detail regarding the men who are the object of his revelation (1:18b). He says these men are those who are continuously seeing God’s revelation about Himself and suppressing it (still present tense) because of their unrighteousness. Then, verses 19 and 20 serve to verify (“for”) Paul’s statement that mankind is indeed suppressing the truth that God has been revealing. Paul states that this truth is evident to mankind, because God has revealed it among them (1:19) through His creation of the world, thus making mankind without excuse for their rejection. Paul makes it very clear that mankind’s problem is not that they have heard the truth, because God has made Himself very evident through His creation.*

The second fact: *The second fact that mankind is continuously rejecting God’s revelation is established (1:21-23) and then re-affirmed two other times (1:25, 28) within the final verses of this section. Paul reveals how mankind does not give the honor and thanks to God that He deserves, but rather becomes useless in his thinking, heart, professions, and worship. Paul also seems to show the degeneration of mankind’s knowledge of the truth (1:21), to his exchange of the truth for a lie (1:25), and ultimately, to his total rejection of truth’s existence (1:28).*

The third fact: *The third fact that God is judging mankind for their rejection of Him as their authoritative King is also established three times (1:24, 26, 28) within this section’s final verses. Paul discloses how God disciplines mankind for their rejection of Him by allowing them to be given over to the lust of their hearts, degrading passions, and depraved minds. Paul’s disclosure seems to suggest two things: one, God normally loves mankind by holding them back from themselves; two, when man is left to chase after his inward passions, the result is chaos. The list of sins provided through this section makes it clear that God has had to discipline every single person who has ever lived.*

The fourth fact: *The last fact that mankind continuously sins and encourages others to sin with full knowledge of God's demands and future judgment is established in 1:32. In this verse Paul provides a conclusion to this first line of reasoning (1:18-32). Paul establishes before his readers that mankind's problem is not knowledge, but rebellion. Mankind knows about God's ordinances and knows that those who sin against God are condemned. However, despite that knowledge, mankind chooses to not only sin, but also to wholeheartedly approve of the sin of others. From God's perspective, mankind is not basically good but rather arrogantly rebellious.*

With these four facts, Paul sets forth his first line of reasoning for his thesis statement. He establishes the fact that the non-religious are unrighteous and condemned because of their suppression of the truth they know about God. The establishment of these facts set the stage for non-religious to acknowledge their need for help. The only problem remaining is that there are a group of religious people who think that they don't need help because of their religious piety, so Paul addresses them next (2:1-3:8).

OUTLINE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

II) The Bad News: Man is condemned and in need of the righteousness of God which comes through faith alone (1:18-3:20)

- A) The need for God's righteousness proven through the non-religious suppression of the truth they know about God (1:18-32)
 - 1) Paul's declaration that God has revealed the truth about His wrath to all mankind (1:18-20)
 - (a) The revelation of God's wrath stated: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (1:18a)
 - (b) The object of God's wrath explained: Those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (1:18b)
 - (c) The proof that mankind suppresses of the truth (1:19-20)
 - (i) Because God is evident among men (1:19a)
 - (ii) Because God made himself evident to mankind (1:19b)
 - (iii) Because God has been clearly seen by mankind through creation (1:20)
 - 1. Creation manifests God's invisible attributes (1:20)
 - 2. Creation manifests God's eternal power (1:20)
 - 3. Creation manifests God's divine nature (1:20)
 - (d) The result of mankind's clear revelation about God: Mankind is without excuse (1:20)
 - 2) Paul's description of mankind's response to God's truth about Himself (1:21-23)
 - (a) Mankind did not respond to God's knowledge appropriately (1:21)
 - (i) Mankind did not give God the honor such knowledge deserves (1:21)
 - (ii) Mankind did not give God the thanks such knowledge deserves (1:21)
 - (b) Mankind responded to God's knowledge inappropriately (1:21-23)
 - (i) Mankind became useless in his assumption (1:21)
 - (ii) Mankind's heart became foolish and darkened (1:21)
 - (iii) Mankind's profession of wisdom became idiotic (1:22)
 - (iv) Mankind chose to worship himself and animals over the splendor and majesty of God (1:23)
 - 3) Paul's depiction of God's response to mankind's rejection of His clear revelation (1:24)
 - (a) God's wrath is revealed by giving mankind over to fulfill the impurity of his lustful heart (1:24)

- (b) God wrath is revealed through people dishonoring their bodies among one another (1:24)
- 4) Paul's second description of mankind's response to God's clear revelation (1:25)
 - (a) Mankind has clearly suppressed his knowledge of God (1:25)
 - (b) Mankind has exchanged God's revelation of the truth for a lie (1:25)
 - (c) Mankind has worshiped the created things rather than the Creator (1:25)
 - (d) Mankind has served the created things rather than the Creator (1:25)
- 5) Paul's second depiction of God's response to man's rejection of His clear revelation (1:26-27)
 - (a) God's wrath is revealed through God giving man over to degrading passions (1:26-27)
 - (i) Women and men exchange their natural function for unnatural functions and burn in their hearts for homosexual relationships (1:26-27)
 - (ii) Homosexuals commit indecent acts (1:27)
 - (iii) Homosexuals receive the due penalty of their error (1:27)
- 6) Paul's third description of mankind's response to God's clear revelation (1:28)
 - (a) Mankind has clearly suppressed his knowledge of God (1:28)
 - (i) Mankind chose to no longer acknowledge God (1:28)
- 7) Paul's third depiction of God's response to man's rejection of His clear revelation (1:28-32)
 - (a) God's wrath is revealed by giving man over to a depraved mind (1:28-32)
 - (i) Mankind is given over to do improper things ~ list given (1:28-31)
- 8) Paul's conclusion regarding mankind's response to God's clear revelation of himself (1:32)
 - (a) Mankind sins even though he knows God's requirements and that God will punish those who don't obey His requirements (1:32)
 - (b) Mankind encourages each other to sin though they know God's requirements and that God will punish those who don't obey God's requirements (1:32)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. What do you think is the relationship between verses 17 and 18, as indicated by the "for"?
2. To whom has God been revealing his wrath in verse 18?
3. What does verse 18 say these men are doing to deserve God's wrath?
4. According to verse 19, in what way has God revealed his wrath?
5. What do you think is this truth that is being pushed away in verse 18?
6. According to verse 20, for how long has God been making himself known to mankind?

7. In verse 20, how has God revealed himself?
8. What does Paul say man does not have in verse 20?
9. In verse 21, even though mankind knows God, in what two ways does he respond to God?
10. What four effects of man's rejection of God are upon mankind in verses 21-23?
11. According to verse 24, what is God's ethical response to man's rejection?
12. For what reason does God give man over to his lust (see the word "for" in verse 25)?
13. What does man exchange for a lie, according to verse 25?
14. Instead of worshiping the Creator, who does mankind worship?
15. In verse 26, what is God's response to man's actions in verse 25?
16. In verses 26-27, in what actions does mankind partake when given over to their passions?
17. In verse 28, what was God's response to man's actions in verses 26 and 27?
18. Why do you think God gives this list of sins in verses 29-32?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

Why would a loving God pour his wrath on mankind? Paul in a remarkable way shows God's love for mankind in verses 18-21. He does this by declaring that God has clearly made Himself known to mankind. Paul also makes it clear that mankind's rejection of God is not a result of God's lack of love or revelation, but rather man's hatred of God's rule over them. Consequently, since God is the judge of the whole earth, He is left with only one decision: judgment. If a judge lets a criminal free, he is considered unethical or sinful, so it would be for God if He let mankind's sin go unpunished. Nonetheless, God's wrath in verses 24, 26 and 28 is a deliberate act of both judgment and mercy on the part of God, because He is disciplining in order to bring about healing. This act is not necessarily final! God is allowing these people to go their own way, in order that they might at last learn from their own sinfulness to hate the futility of a life turned away from God's rule over them.²⁸

How do verses 18-32 prove man's need for God's righteousness? These verses are a picture of the true inner man, universally. Each person who is honest with himself can relate to this rebellion in his heart against God's truth. Paul is showing each one of his readers that his heart is so greatly wicked that only God is able to rescue him. He is also revealing to his readers how the world has arrived in its current status. Why does mankind have barred windows, a worldwide poverty problem, schools filled with rebellious children, and televisions filled with perversion? Our world is in rebellion against its King, with no desire to bend its knee in humble obedience. The good news is that through the finished work of Jesus Christ, there is hope for mankind to experience deliverance. To God alone be all glory!²⁹

What was Paul's view of homosexuality in verses 26-27? There are five things about homosexuality that Paul makes known in these verses. First, due to the context, he makes it known that this is an act of rebellion against God's revelation about Himself. Secondly, in context, this act is clearly seen as sin, as indecent, and as error. Thirdly, this act is portrayed as a perversion of God's creation. The act goes against what is natural in God's creative order. Fourthly, homosexuality is a result of mankind not wanting to acknowledge God any longer. It is for this reason that a man cannot claim to be in a right relationship with God and live in a lifestyle of homosexuality. These two claims are impossible to co-exist, due to their strong opposition to one another. Lastly, this indecent act deserves judgment. God's holy nature is shown to not be able to tolerate such behavior.

What is man's problem in verses 18-32? This is really important for religious people to understand. Mankind's problem is not that he does not know the truth. Mankind's problem is that he does not submit to the truth that he knows. Verse 21 shows that mankind response to God's revelation about Himself is not honor or thanks but rather rebellion and foolishness. These truths really need to cause all mankind to think about what their response is to God! Are our lives marked by giving honor and worship to God? If a person's life is not marked by honor and worship to God, then he is not pleasing God. A Christian or person of faith is not a person who knows the truth, but a person who lives in light of the truth he knows!

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 2:1-16

²⁸ Cranfield, 121

²⁹ Hendriksen, 82 EZCX

As a person looks at the ministry of Jesus Christ, one easily notices that the religious leaders were the least receptive to His message. This is because the religious leaders had a hard time seeing the sinfulness of their own hearts. Paul knew their problem so he awkwardly used these verses from 1:31 to 2:1 to transition the readers from the non-religious to the religious people. As an interpreter, two aspects of his transition are difficult to determine. First, what is the function of Paul's word "therefore" in 2:1? Second, who is Paul's intended audience? Clearly, both sections are closely connected, as indicated by the word "therefore" in 2:1. The word "therefore" is thus going to continue Paul's previous argument that mankind is condemned and in need of God's righteousness. However, what is not so clear is Paul's abrupt change of audience from the non-religious heathen to the religious heathen--those who are passing judgment. In Romans 1:32, Paul has made two facts very apparent. One, the Gentiles or non-religious "know the ordinance of God" and they know that those "who practice such things as unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder strife, deceit, malice..." are worthy of death. Two, even though these men know the effects of their sinful behavior, they continue to sin anyway. Having established these two facts about the non-religious, Paul is going to use the "therefore" to turn to the religious. He is going to use the condemnation of the non-religious heathen (1:18-32) as a platform for which to bring his accusation against the religious. But who are these religious? Is Paul intending to address the Jew, the Gentile, or both? Who is the primary audience within the mind of Paul? It can't be the Gentiles alone, because most of the religious in Paul's day were Jewish! However, it is most likely not only Jews, or Paul would have introduced them in verse 1 rather than waiting until verse 17. Therefore, Paul probably has both Jews and Gentiles in mind. However, the primary target of these judgmental ones is probably his Jewish brethren, which becomes very clear as Paul moves closer and closer to verse 17. Nevertheless, it seems that Paul is intentionally ambiguous regarding his intended target, so that all those who are religious (both Jew and Gentile) will personalize the weight of his argument. Having understood Paul's transition from the non-religious to the religious, we can now look specifically at the section at hand, which can be broken down into three teachings.

The first teaching: *Paul's first teaching discusses why the judgmental religious are condemned and without excuse (2:1-5). In verses 1-2, Paul condemns these judgmental ones for their hypocritical lifestyles. Paul in essence is going to say, "If the non-religious know the ordinances of God and that those who practice such things (1:31) are worthy of death, how about the judgmental? Clearly, if judgmental ones live the same lifestyle as those who are non-religious, they must know that they are condemned as well!" Remember: Paul is establishing within his readers the knowledge that all mankind is condemned, in need of God's righteousness, and awaiting God's judgment! In verses 3-4, Paul is going to expose the foolishness of the thinking of these judgmental ones. Then, in verse 5, Paul is going to reveal the truth concerning position of their souls.*

The second teaching: *Paul's second teaching is about God's future judgment. Paul uses the language of God's judgment in verse 5 to transition into a fuller discussion of God's judgment in verses 6-10. The pervasive fact that Paul wants to reveal to his readers is that God will one day judge all mankind. In verse 6, Paul states the fact that God will one day judge all mankind according to his works. In verses 7-10, Paul describes the two outcomes that God will render in His future day of judgment. He clearly reveals that God will render eternal life to those who are persistent in doing good, and wrath and indignation to those who are selfishly ambitious. The key element contributing to man's future destiny is his works. Paul reveals that God's judgment is in accordance with man's deeds (vv. 6-10). However, it is important to clearly understand that Paul is not saying that man is saved or finds favor with God through (or by means of) his deeds. He is just saying that God's judgment will be in accordance with man's works*

and not in accordance with man's knowledge or privileges (see comments below for a further explanation). The focus of Paul's argument is God's judgment, not God's salvation. It is not until 3:21 and following that God will reveal the means through which man is saved. Furthermore, it is important to take note of Paul's emphasis on how this judgment is "for every soul of man who does evil." Paul wants it to be very clear that there is not any man who is excluded from this future judgment (see verses 6, 9, 10). This news would have been shocking to the Jewish readers. In their minds, they were exempt from God's wrath because of their participation within the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. This false belief leads Paul to teach on a third area.

The third teaching: *Paul's last teaching in this passage discusses why God's judgment will fall on both those who possess the Law (Jews) and those who do not possess the Law (Gentiles: 2:11-16). In verses 11-16, Paul goes to great lengths to explain how the Jews (those with the Law) will be judged by the same standards as the Gentiles (those without the Law). In verse 11, he makes it clear that God's judgment is without favoritism or partiality (that is, preferential treatment or bias). In verse 12, he explains specifically what he means by the fact that God's judgment is without favoritism by explaining how God's judgment falls on both those with and without the Law. In verse 13, Paul narrows his argument to clarify why it is that those who possess the Law will be judged. Then finally, in verses 14-16, Paul reveals how it is not only the Jews who have the Law but the Gentiles also possess a law... a law that will also accuse or defend them on that future day of judgment. Paul's argument here reveals to the Jews the fact that they have no advantage when it comes to God's judgment. This argument will set up Paul's next argument in 2:17, where Paul will look at the Jew and his privileges specifically.*

OUTLINE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

II) The Bad News: Man is condemned and in need of the righteousness of God which comes through faith alone (1:18-3:20)

- B) The need for God's righteousness proven through the failure of the religious judgmental to live out the truth he clearly knows about God (2:1-16)
 - 1) Paul's teaching regarding why the judgmental religious are condemned and without excuse (2:1-5)
 - (a) Paul's pronouncement of judgmental religious people: "You have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment" (2:1a)
 - (b) Paul's explanation for why the judgmental religious are without excuse: (2:1b-2)
 - (i) They do the very same sinful activities they are condemning in others
 - (ii) They know that God brings judgment on those who practice such sinful activities (2:2)
 - (c) Paul's exposing of the false thinking of these judgmental religious people (2:3-4)
 - (i) They think passing judgment enables a man to escape God's wrath (2:3)
 - (ii) They think God will deal lightly with those who take for granted God's kindness (2:4)
 - (d) Paul's enlightening of the judgmental religious about the truth of their future judgment (2:5)
 - (i) You are storing up wrath (in the day of wrath and righteous judgment) because of your stubbornness (2:5)
 - (ii) You are storing up wrath (in the day of wrath and righteous judgment) because of your unrepentant heart (2:5)

- 2) Paul's teaching regarding God's future judgment (2:6-10)
 - (a) God's future judgment will be rendered in accordance with man's works (2:6)
 - (b) God's future judgment will result in two possible outcomes (2:7-8)
 - (i) Those who by their persistence in good works are seeking glory, honor, and immortality will receive eternal life (2:7)
 - (ii) Those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth God will render wrath and indignation (2:8)
 - (c) Two outcomes of God's future judgment restated (2:9-10)
 - (i) There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil ~ To the Jew first and also of the Greek (2:9)
 - (ii) There will be glory, honor, and peace to everyone who does good ~ To the Jew first and also of the Greek (2:10)
- 3) Paul's teaching regarding why God's judgment will fall on both those who possess and those who do not possess the Law of Moses (2:11-16)
 - (a) Paul's clarification of why he will give glory, honor, and peace to the Greeks also: Because God's judgment is given without favoritism (2:11)
 - (b) Paul's further embellishment on the impartiality of God's judgment (2:12)
 - (i) All those who sin without the Law will perish without the Law (2:12a)
 - (ii) All those who sin with (in the sphere of) the Law will be judged by the Law (2:12b)
 - (c) Paul's further clarification on why those with the Law will be judged by the Law (2:13)
 - (i) It is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God (2:13a)
 - (ii) It is the doers of the Law who will be justified (2:13b)
 - (d) Paul's further proof that mankind will not be justified merely based on his hearing of the Law (2:14-16)
 - (i) Even though the Gentiles do not have the Law (Written Law of Moses), some instinctively obey the things of the Law of Moses, thus becoming a law unto themselves ~ revealing that they too possess a law (2:14)
 1. They become a law unto themselves in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts through their consciences bearing witness and their thoughts alternatively accusing or defending them (2:15)
 - (ii) These Gentiles, who also possess a law, will one day sit before God's judgment seat with the secrets of their hearts judged by Jesus Christ (2:16)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. According to 2:1, who has no excuse?
2. What does verse 1 say that this person is doing to himself?
3. In what way does verse 1 say that this judgmental person is condemning himself?
4. What happens to the person who practices the things spoken of in verse 32, according to verse 2?

5. What do you think Paul's point is in verse 3?
6. What is this religious person doing, according to verse 4?
7. In what way do you think Paul is suggesting that God has been kind, tolerant, and patient?
8. What should be the result of God's kindness?
9. What is this stubborn and unrepentant religious person doing in verse 5?
10. In verse five, how does Paul describe God's judgment?
11. According to verse 6, what will be the basis of God's judgment?
12. Who are the people to which eternal life will be given in verse 7?
13. What do you think the word "seek" is suggesting in verse 7?
14. What two descriptions does Paul give for those on whom God's wrath will fall in verse 8?
15. What do you think is the meaning of the two words Paul gives for God's judgment in verse 8?
16. What further description does Paul give in verse 9 for those who will receive God's judgment?
17. What three results does Paul give in verse 10 for those who will go to heaven?
18. What does verse 11 say about God's judgment?
19. What do you think Paul is trying to communicate to his readers in verse 12?

20. Who is and is not justified in verse 13?
21. What does Paul reveal about the person who obeys God instinctively in verse 14?
22. What do verses 15 and 16 say that God will do in the future to these Gentiles who instinctively do the things of the Law?
23. In the final Day of Judgment, what will God judge, according to verse 16?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

- A. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
- B. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

What is the function of the "therefore" in 2:1 in relationship to 1:32 and 2:1 and following? The function of the word "therefore" is to pull all that was said previously and provide a concluding thought. This is precisely what is done here in 2:1. When Paul makes his concluding thought, though, he changes his audience. Therefore, Paul is saying, "Since all non-religious mankind knows the ordinance of God, those who are slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, etc. are worthy of death, condemned, and without excuse, the result must be true of religious mankind as well."

Are these verses suggesting that man is saved by his works? Paul is definitely not saying that man can be saved or find favor with God through his works. His point is that knowledge, birth, heritage, family, reputation, etc., do not matter before God, because He does not judge with favoritism. What matters to God is who you are, not what you know. According to Romans 1:18-2:5, we are all condemned. After all, who is not unloving, unmerciful, without understanding, disobedient to parents, and such things (1:31)? Therefore, if we are judged according to our deeds, we are in a lot of trouble! Paul says in Romans 3:20, that man is not saved by the works of the Law, but by faith (Rom. 1:17; 3:20-24; Eph 2:8-9), by repentance (2 Cor. 9-11; Matt. 3:2; 4:17), and by being born again (John 3), and these are not attained by works but are given to man by God's grace. Furthermore, these are all made evident in a man by what he does (James 4). A man's obedience does not make him right with God; a man's obedience only shows signs of the Spirit of God's life in man. Just like a fruit tree will show its life by producing fruit, so a Christian man will show his spiritual life by his spiritual fruit of humble obedience (evidence of God's Spirit at work within

him). As we move along in Romans we will see that it is only by the deeds of one man, Jesus Christ, that we are saved (Rom 5:15-17).

What is Paul trying to say in verses 12 through 16? These verses can be confusing unless one studies them very carefully and patiently. It is also important to have a good understanding of the Jewish mindset of that day. The Jews of Paul's day had a belief that God loved them and did not love the world. They believed that since God gave them the Law and they were God's chosen nation, they automatically had a secured heavenly position in God's future kingdom. However, their hope was false! Therefore, Paul wants both the Jews and Gentiles to clearly understand that God's future judgment is without favoritism. Due to sensitivity of the issue, Paul goes into great detail to defend why God will judge those who possess the Law of Moses along with those who do not possess the Law of Moses. To clearly understand Paul's argument, one has to follow the three different "for" words at the beginning of each sentence. These "for" words are used by Paul as a signal that he is going to explain or clarify his previous statement. In verse 12, Paul clarifies what he means by the statement that there is no partiality with God. The answer he provides is that both those who have the Law and those who don't have the Law will be judged. In verse 13, Paul explains why those who have the Law are going to be judged. The answer he provides is the fact that God has revealed that it is not the hearers who are just before God, so just having the Law is not good enough. Lastly, in verse 14, Paul logically explains why believing in the idea that merely possessing the Law can save a person is foolish and not worthy of one's trust. Paul explains the foolishness of the Jewish belief by showing his readers how the Gentiles also have a Law that accuses and defends them, but they are still going to be judged. His logic is that if the Gentile has a law and is going to be judged, the Jew, who has the written Law, will also be judged. It should be noted that many Bible scholars have argued over whether or not verses 14-16 are talking about a believing Gentile or an unbelieving Gentile. Thomas Schreiner in his great commentary does the best job presenting both sides very clearly.³⁰ The interpretation of this section is not easy to deduce because the "for" is connected immediately to the statement "the doers the Law will be justified." Therefore, one would think that verses 14-16 give an example of one who is a justified doer of the Word, thus interpreting these verses as referring to a believer. However, after looking more closely at the bigger context and looking more intently at the content of verses 14-16, it seems best to see these verses as referring back to Paul's statement in verse 13a that it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, thus identifying these Gentiles as unbelievers. As Schreiner points out, the main point of verses 14-16 that the Gentiles have a law but are still judged seems to fit the larger context of Paul's argument that the Jews still must be judged despite their possession of the Mosaic Law.³¹ As well, a Christian is not described as a "law unto himself" but as a person who is controlled by the Spirit, thus able to live in obedience to the Law. Lastly, if this was talking about a Christian, why is he being accused on the Day of Judgment? Therefore, I agree with Schreiner that the best interpretation is to see these verses as referring back to verse 13a and that of an unbeliever.

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 2:17-29

As a schoolboy who is the son of the principal (or head master) thinks he will find special favor in his performance among the teachers, so it is with the Jews. Due to their special covenantal relationship with God, they think they will find special favor in the Day of Judgment. Therefore, in

³⁰ Thomas Schreiner, pg.120-124

³¹ Thomas Schreiner, pg. 121-

this section (2:17-29), Paul is going to reveal a fourth teaching which deals with the question of why the Jews specifically will experience God's judgment despite their God-given covenantal privileges. Until now in Paul's argument, he has been indirectly referring to the Jews through his discussion regarding the Law; but now he is going to directly address two issues pertaining to the Jews. One, why the God-given Jewish privileges are not able to save the Jewish people spiritually (2:17-24). Two, why the God-commanded rite of circumcision is not able to save the Jewish people spiritually (2:25-29). Remember, within the big picture of Paul's whole argument, this section is showing how the Jews are in need of a righteousness outside of themselves due to their inability to stand before God based on their own God-given merit or privileges.

The first issue: *The first issue of why the God-given Jewish privileges are not able to save the Jewish people spiritually (2:17-24) is dramatically presented. Paul first (2:17-20) builds up the Jew, showing how God has so richly blessed them. He does so by listing all of the Jew's covenantal and ministerial privileges. Then (2:21-23), Paul tears down the Jew by showing the reader how the Jews, despite their privileges, teach others but do not teach themselves, and boast in the Law but dishonor God through the breaking of its statutes. Paul does this through a series of six questions. Finally (2:24), Paul destroys the Jews when he refers to them in Isaiah 52:5 as blaspheming the name of God among the Gentiles. This final statement gives a devastating and humiliating blow to the Jew, who has been priding himself in his self-righteousness and thinking that because he has his covenantal privileges he will escape God's judgment. This statement together with Paul's third teaching (2:11-16), show the Jew that they are guilty before God and in trouble on the coming Day of Judgment.*

The second issue: *The second issue of why the God-commanded rite of circumcision is not able to save the Jewish people spiritually (2:25-29) is impressively portrayed logically. Paul portrays his point by building off of a statement of truth regarding physical circumcision (2:25). Paul makes it clear that circumcision has value only when it is accompanied with obedience to the Law. If one is physically circumcised and does not obey the Law, then his physical circumcision will provide absolutely no spiritual benefit. Paul actually indirectly tells them that if they don't keep the Law then they are spiritually not Jews. This news would have been shocking to the Jewish mind, because they thought that physical circumcision resulted in both physical and spiritual blessing. However, Paul is letting them know that this is not true. Having set forth the truth about circumcision, Paul advances his argument by indirectly declaring (made evident by the questions) two results for the non-circumcised Gentile that logically flow from the truths of 2:25. The first result (2:26) indirectly declared is that a Gentile (non-circumcised) can spiritually become a Jew (circumcised) if he keeps the requirements of the Law. The second result (2:27) indirectly declared is that a Gentile (non-circumcised) can actually one day judge a non-law keeping Jew if he keeps the Law. A Jew hearing these two statements would not be happy, so Paul further provides an explanation in 2:28-29 for these two statements. Paul tells his reader that the reason a Gentile can become a spiritual Jew and judge a non-law abiding Jew is because of the true definition of a spiritual Jew. Paul reveals that a true spiritual Jew is not (2:28) one who is outwardly changed, nor is spiritual circumcision performed outwardly with one's hands. A true spiritual Jew is (2:29) one who is inwardly changed in the heart by the Spirit of God and who seeks his praise from God.*

These two issues that Paul addressed must have silenced the Jews. Once Paul redefines who a spiritual Jew is, the Jews can only ask themselves the question, "Am I a spiritual Jew?" The Jew

cannot point externally anymore but only must look internally. Paul has the Jew exactly where he wants him – looking outside of himself for help!

OUTLINE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

II) Condemnation: The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)

C) The need for God's righteousness proven through the Jews' inability to rely on their covenantal privileges (2:17-3:8)

1) Paul's teaching on why the Jews specifically will experience God's judgment despite having God-given covenantal privileges (2:17-29)

(a) Paul's explanation for why God-given Jewish privileges are not able to save the Jewish people spiritually (2:17-24)

(i) The Jewish covenantal privileges (2:17-18)

1. Bear the name Jew (2:17)
2. Rely upon the Law (2:17)
3. Boast in God (2:17)
4. Know God's Will (2:18)
5. Approve the things that are essential (2:18)
 - a. Because you have been instructed out of the Law (2:18)

(ii) The Jewish ministerial privileges (2:17-20)

1. A guide to the blind (2:19)
2. A light to those in darkness (2:19)
3. A corrector of the foolish (2:20)
4. A teacher of the immature (2:20)
 - a. Because they have the Law which is the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth (2:20)

(iii) The indirect questions of accusation to the Jews (2:21-22)

1. You who teach others – do you teach yourself? (2:21)
2. You who preach that one should not steal – do you steal? (2:21)
3. You who say one should not commit adultery – do you commit adultery? (2:22)
4. You who abhor idols – do you rob temples? (2:22)

(iv) The direct answer to the indirect questions of accusation to the Jewish (2:23-24)

1. You who boast in the Law – through your breaking of the Law, do you dishonor God? (2:23)
2. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you (2:24)

(b) Paul's explanation for why the God-commanded rite of circumcision is not able to save the Jewish people spiritually (2:25-29)

(i) The stated truth about physical circumcision (2:25)

1. Indeed circumcision is of value, if you practice the Law (2:25)
2. If you are a transgressor of the Law, your physical circumcision has become uncircumcision (2:25)

(ii) The declared logical consequences resulting from the truth about circumcision (2:26-27)

1. If the physically uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his physical uncircumcision be regarded as spiritual circumcision? (2:26)

2. He who is physically uncircumcised – if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who through having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? (2:27)
- (iii) The clarified rational explanation for why a physically uncircumcised person can become a spiritually circumcised person (2:28-29)
 1. A spiritual Jew is not an outward matter, nor is spiritual circumcision performed outwardly on the flesh (2:28)
 2. A spiritual Jew is an inward matter, and spiritual circumcision is of the heart (2:29a)
 - a. Paul expresses the means through which the heart is changed (2:29b)
 - i. Spiritual circumcision takes place by means of the Spirit of God (2:29b)
 - ii. Spiritual circumcision does not take place by means of the Law (2:29b)
 - b. Paul expresses the outcome of spiritual circumcision on the heart (2:29b)
 - i. Spiritual circumcision does not seek praise from man (2:29b)
 - ii. Spiritual circumcision seeks praise from God (2:29b)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In verse 17, to whom does Paul turn?
2. What descriptions does Paul give for these Jews, in verses 17-20?
3. In verses 19-20, in what four roles are these Jews confident?
4. According to verse 20, what is motivating these “Jews” to be confident in these things?
5. What five questions does Paul ask the Jew in verses 21-23?
6. What do you think Paul is trying to do in verses 21-23?
7. What accusation does Paul bring against the Jews in verse 24 (using Is. 52:5)?
8. In verse 25a, what truth does Paul reveal about circumcision?
9. What value do you think physical circumcision has for a Jew?
10. What happens to a Jew's circumcision spiritually when he sins against the law?

11. What two truths does Paul suggest that are true about a Gentile if he keeps the Law, according to verse 27?
12. According to verse 28, who is not a true spiritual Jew?
13. According to verse 29, who is a true spiritual Jew?
14. In verse 29, from whom does the spiritual Jew not receive praise?
15. In verse 29, from whom does the spiritual Jew receive praise?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

For what purpose did God establish His relationship with Israel? Israel's purpose is found in Exodus 19:6. They were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to God. They were to be God's special people through which His name was to be made known to all the nations. It was to this special nation that God gave the revelation of Himself (Rom 3:2). It was through this special nation that God promised to send God's Son as a redeemer of sinful mankind. It was this nation that God promised to always love unconditionally. This nation will always be God's special people. There is no nation that could ever replace this role. Nonetheless, God never promised Israel eternal salvation in heaven. God's blessings and privileges for Israel were never intended to provide God's eternal salvation from hell; this was always for those who placed their faith in the God of Israel.

Are the credentials that Paul gives for the Jews in 2:17-20 true of the Jews, or is Paul just being sarcastic? The Jewish people have been given a special relationship with God, a special relationship that comes with special privileges. Some of these true privileges are what Paul lists out for his readers in 2:17-20. The biblical scholar Cranfield comments, "Throughout vv. 17-20 Paul appears to be deliberately taking up claims which were actually being made by his fellow Jews, echoing the very language in which they were being expressed... while there is a little irony in each of the

following items by which the Jew is described ... they are not merely ironical, but also a sincere acknowledgement of the position and mission which the Jews in fact have been given ... in the whole Gentile world.”³² Cranfield’s statement is proven to be true by the fact that many of the credentials are clearly taught in the Old Testament (Ps. 19:7-11, 119:105; Jer. 9:23; Isa. 2:1-4, 42:6-7, 49:6, Ex. 19:5-6; Mic. 4:1-4).

Is Paul suggesting in 2:25-27 that Gentiles can be saved through the Law, or is he just being hypothetical (theoretical or imaginary)? This is not an easy question to answer because the language seems to suggest the possibility that a Gentile can be saved by means of the Law. But Paul’s teaching everywhere suggests that they cannot be saved by means of the Law. Some try and find a compromise between both of these views by suggesting that this is a Christian who is saved through the Law by Christ.³³ However, the bigger context and Paul’s very clear teaching elsewhere make it clear that Paul is hypothetically referring to a Gentile being saved by means of the Law.³⁴ Paul of all people knew that a man could not be saved through the Law, because he lived his whole life with that pursuit. It was not until he realized his inability to obtain his own righteousness through the means of the Law that he was able to see his need for a Savior. Paul gives this testimony in Philippians 3:1-11. He also prays that his fellow Jews would come to this understanding in Romans 10:1-10. Contextually, Paul refers to the Gentiles as hypothetically being able to obtain salvation if they keep the Law, because he wants to logically show his Jewish readers that the Gentiles are also eligible for spiritual salvation. Consequently, a Jew is also liable for judgment just as a Gentile is. For Paul to accomplish this goal, he brings forth this hypothetical situation. The teaching from here on forward will make this point clear because Paul is going to show how “there is none righteous, not even one” (3:10), “there is none good not even one” (3:12) and that “by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His (God’s) sight” (3:20).

What is Paul’s point throughout this section 2:17-29? Douglas Moo in his excellent commentary correctly insists that Paul’s “point in this section is not to demonstrate that Jews commit sins (no Jew would deny that) but that these sins, despite possession of the Law and circumcision, make Jews just as liable to God’s judgment as Gentiles... the law and circumcision are of no value... Only if the law is ‘done,’ and, Paul implies, done perfectly, will the election on the basis of the Mosaic covenant be of value to the Jew.”³⁵

Who is a spiritual Jew? Paul makes a powerful distinction between a true Christian and a false Christian in 2:28-29. Paul makes it very clear that a Christian (or a spiritual Jew) is one who has been changed inwardly, not outwardly. A Christian is not a moral conformist but is morally transformed, meaning his moral pursuit is a result of an internal heart change and not a result of external social pressure. Paul makes this clear because he declares how the Christian does not live to receive his praise from mankind but from God alone. This is further verified in Galatians 1:10 when Paul says, “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ (or a Christian).” It was Paul’s concern as well as Christ’s concern that people understand who is a true

³² Cranfield, 164

³³ Thomas Schreiner gives a very convincing argument in favor of this interpretation in his commentary (pg 139-144). He builds his case manly off the fact the immediate language in these verses and the use of the “for” in verse in verse 28.

³⁴ Douglas Moo suggest this view because of the critical distinction Paul makes between faith and the works of the Law continuously throughout his letters (3:20, 27-28, 4:2-5, 13-16, 10:5-8) and other letters (such as Gal 3:12).

³⁵ Moo Pg. 158

believer and who is not. Here Paul makes it clear that a Christian is not a person who saves himself but one who is saved by the transforming work of God's Spirit (he will talk more about the role of God's Spirit in salvation in the coming chapters). This message should cause every reader to be alarmed and to examine himself internally. No man should be too proud to ask himself, "What motivates my obedience?" Remember Jesus' teaching in Matt 13:24-30 that the wheat and the tares, which look the same, will be allowed to grow up together until God separates them on His final Day of Judgment. O, that man would take seriously Paul's startling words, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourself! Or do you not recognize this about yourself, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5)

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 3:1-8

Just like any guilty defendant sitting before his accuser and trying to find any excuse to avoid his inevitable outcome, this imaginary Jewish skeptic does the same. Paul, having been formerly an unconverted, committed, religious Jew, knows the mind of his Jewish brethren. Therefore, in 3:1-8, Paul enters into his former thinking and poses five questions, ultimately objecting himself in order to make his view about God's future judgment of the Jews clear (1:1, 3, 5, 7, 9). For Paul's Jewish brethren to embrace his conclusion, these five questions need to be addressed. However, the final question has been placed into its own section (3:9-20), because the nature of its content consists of all mankind and not just Israel. Therefore, this section will deal with the first four questions (1:1, 3, 5, 7).

The first question (3:1-2): "What advantage is there in being a physical Jew?" is the logical next question for the Jew who is part of God's chosen nation. After all, if you were a Jew who grows up hearing from the Old Testament that you were God's advantaged nation, and then Paul told you that you have no spiritual advantage over the Gentiles in your future judgment, you would naturally ask the question, "So do we as Jews have any advantages over the Gentile?" Therefore, Paul, assuming his reader's mind, brings this question up first. Paul's answer is emphatic, affirming the great advantages of his Jewish brethren! This answer reveals that Paul's intention has never been to deny the fact that the Jews have been given the greatest advantages as God's chosen nation, but to deny the belief that these privileges provide advantage or escape in God's future Day of Judgment.³⁶ Paul would never deny his own advantages or future promises (Romans 9-11), which is why he expands his answer to include one of Israel's greatest advantages, the privilege of being given the oracles (or words) of God. It appears that Paul wanted to add more than just one advantage (based on his statement "first of all"), but changed his mind and moved on to the next important question. However, Paul will address Israel's advantages (9:4-5) and future plan in Romans 9-11.

The second question (3:3-4): "Will God be faithful to His covenantal promises, even if some of Israel has not been faithful to their covenantal obligations?" Paul's answer is, "God will absolutely be faithful to his covenantal promises!" He says, "May it never be!" (3:4) that God would be found unfaithful. He follows up his immediate response by saying, "Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar." (3:4) In essence, Paul is saying that if every person who ever lived was found to be a liar, God would still be found to be true! By the use of this imperative, makes a "confessional truth about God; He

³⁶ Moo Pg. 181

remains true to His promises.”³⁷ Paul affirms the faithfulness of God one last time by quoting from Psalm 51:4.

The third and fourth questions (3:5-6, 3:7-8): *The third and fourth sets of questions can really be put under one question, “Is God really righteous as a judge?” The only difference between both sets of questions is that the third set of questions looks at the subject broadly, whereas the fourth set of questions looks at the subject more specifically and adds to it the skeptic’s claim the idea that Paul’s doctrine encourages sin.*³⁸ *In both sets of questions, the argument Paul brings forth through his imaginary skeptic is that since sin (or a lie) ultimately brings about the good of manifesting how righteous God is, then the Jew should not be held responsible for doing evil. Paul’s response in both sets of questions is that God’s judgment on the Jew is right, and it is impossible to even consider any notion that God is unrighteous in His judgment. Paul rejects the belief that God is unrighteous in his first response by showing that this teaching does not fit with the biblical doctrine of God as judge (3:6), alluding to the Old Testament passage (Genesis 18:25) that states the fact that “the judge of all the earth must deal justly.”*³⁹ *Paul rejects the idea of God’s unrighteousness and ignores the false accusation that his doctrine encourages sin in his fourth set, by declaring the fact that God’s condemnation is just! These four questions set the stage for Paul’s final statement of condemnation, which he gives in 3:9-21.*

OUTLINE OF PAUL’S MESSAGE:

II) The Bad News: Man is condemned and in need of the righteousness of God which comes through faith alone (1:18-3:20)

- 2) Paul’s teaching on anticipated questions from Jewish skeptics (3:1-9)
 - (a) Questions regarding Jews’ advantage (3:1-2)
 - (i) The questions (3:1)
 1. “What advantage has the Jew?” (3:1a)
 2. “What is the benefit of circumcision?” (3:1b)
 - (ii) The answers (3:2)
 1. Paul’s emphatic response: “great in every respect!” (3:2a)
 2. Paul’s calculated response: “they were entrusted the oracles of God” (3:2b)
 - (b) Questions regarding God’s faithfulness to His covenantal promises (3:3-4)
 - (i) The questions (3:3)
 1. “What if some are unfaithful?” (3:3a)
 2. “Will their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God?” (3:3b)
 - (ii) The answers (3:4)
 1. Paul’s emphatic response: “May it never be!” (3:4a)
 2. Paul’s calculated response: “Rather, let God be found true, though every person is a liar.” (3:4b)
 - a. Paul’s authoritative confirmation of God’s faithfulness: “As it is written, that You may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged” (3:4c)
 - (c) Questions regarding the righteousness of God in His judgment of Israel (3:5-8)
 - (i) The first set of questions regarding God’s righteousness in inflicting wrath (3:5-6)

³⁷ Schreiner pg.151

³⁸ Moo Pg. 180

³⁹ Moo 192

1. The questions (3:5)
 - a. “If our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?” (3:5a)
 - b. “The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous is He?” (3:5b)
 2. The answer (3:8b)
 - a. Paul’s emphatic response: “May it never be!” (3:6a)
 - b. Paul’s calculated response: “For otherwise, how will God judge the world.” (3:6b)
- (ii) The second set of questions regarding God’s righteousness in inflicting wrath (3:7-8)
1. The questions (3:7-8a)
 - a. “If through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?” (3:7)
 - b. “Why not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come?’ ” (3:8a)
 2. The answer (3:8b)
 - a. Paul’s definitive response: “Their condemnation is just” (3:8b)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL’S MESSAGE:

1. What question is Paul bringing up in Romans 3:1?
2. According to 3:2a, does the Jew have an advantage?
3. According to verse 2b, what is the advantage to being a Jew?
4. In verse 3, what is Paul’s Jewish skeptic asking?
5. When Paul says the words, “may it never be” in 3:4, to what is he referring?
6. What do you think Paul is defending in 3:4?
7. If the truthfulness of God were to be put on trial, what would be the result be, according to 3:4b?
8. What do you think is being asked in 3:5?
9. What do you think Paul is saying in his response in 3:6?

10. In what way do you think Paul's question in 3:7 differs from his question in 3:5?

11. What does Paul say people are slanderously reporting about him?

12. Why do you think people would say false things about Paul and his doctrine?

13. What do you think Paul is saying in his response in 3:8?

14. Why do you think Paul responds this way in 3:8?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

Who is asking these questions to Paul? Paul himself probably puts these questions together! As Paul has taught the gospel all throughout Asia Minor and debated with the Jews through his lifetime, he has heard every Jewish argument. Therefore, he wisely arranges the Jewish skeptic's questions, which have been given to him in times past, so that he can systematically silence them with the truth.

Does the Old Testament promise that Israel will one day be saved? As Paul will discuss in Romans 9-11, the Old Testament does promise a bright future for the nation of Israel. The Old Testament makes it very clear that after Israel is disciplined for its rebellion against God, He will restore Israel back to the land of Israel (Ezek. 34:11-13; 37:12-13) and at that time bring them salvation (Ezek. 36:27, 37:14; Zech. 12:10; Rom 11:26). This will be a glorious day and will be the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. There is no more graphic example of God's everlasting and unconditional commitment to love Israel and fulfill His commitment to her than what is recorded in Ezekiel 16. In this chapter, Israel is depicted as a harlot having left her love commitment with God. Nevertheless, God says, "I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you." (Ezekiel 16:60) Schreiner in his commentary says, "The salvation promised in the Old Testament will eventually be realized. The fulfillment of this promise is communicated in the assertion that "all Israel will be saved" (11:26). Already in Romans 3 Paul implies that the fulfillment of the saving promises to Israel will be a miraculous and gracious work

of God. They currently disbelieve and disobey, but in faithfulness to His covenant God will turn them from unbelief to belief and bring to fruition the salvation promised in the Old Testament.”⁴⁰ Despite God’s future promise to save Israel, Paul makes it clear that God is not only faithful to His promise to save but is also faithful to His promise to judge all people for their sin. Even though God has promised to bring salvation to the Jews, no Jew could presume upon those promises and think that he or she is guaranteed salvation.⁴¹

What exactly is God addressing in these verses? It is easy, if one is not careful, to misunderstand Paul’s understanding of God’s special relationship with Israel. From chapter 2 one might come to the conclusion that God is done with Israel and that all the promises given to them by God in the Old Testament should now be given to the true Jew or the Spiritual Jew. It is this concern that actually causes Paul to ask the question, “What advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?” From listening to chapter 2 one might think that Paul would say that there is no advantage at all! But the great biblical scholar Cranfield says that Paul’s answer to the question, “What advantage has the Jew?” has to be “Great in every respect!” If Paul were to say that the Jew has no advantage, he would be calling into question the truthfulness of the Old Testament or the faithfulness of God. The Old Testament makes it clear that God chose a nation out of all mankind to be his special people.⁴² This was an unconditional covenant that was never dependent upon or was a result of Israel’s innate goodness or obedience. Therefore, if Paul were to say that the Jews had no advantage, it would “mean either that the OT is a false witness or else that God has not been faithful to His word. The question Paul is raising is nothing other than the question of the credibility of God.”⁴³ By Paul’s answer, he is confirming that God’s covenant was and is dependent on His own faithfulness and is making it clear that God will remain faithful to His covenantal relationship with the physical nation of Israel. Paul makes it clear that his intention was not to “contest the notion that there were privileges that the Gentiles did not have, but to contrast the notion that these privileges give the Jews an advantage in the judgment.”⁴⁴ In this section Paul has accomplished two things: “He has defended the thesis that Israel is still guilty for its sin, while affirming that the promises of their salvation will still be fulfilled.”⁴⁵

In what does Paul want Israel to boast or put their trust? Paul is seeking to show his Jewish friends the foolishness of trusting in anything other than God’s righteousness for salvation. He therefore brings up the chief issues of Jewish confidence: circumcision and the Law. It is important to understand that the Law was never intended to be a means of salvation; rather, it was designed by God to be a means for one to see his need for salvation. Paul will show us later in Romans that the law’s function was to show mankind their sinfulness (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:7). Circumcision was designed to be a sign of God’s covenant, according to Genesis 17. This sign was to be a reminder to Israel of their covenant responsibilities. It was to prompt Israel to remember to be faithful to their promises to God. Circumcision was not to be a sign to be marched around and boasted in or to be a means of self-confidence.

⁴⁰ Schreiner Pg. 150-151

⁴¹ Schreiner Pg. 152

⁴² Cranfield pg. 176

⁴³ Cranfield Pg. 177

⁴⁴ Moo Pg. 181

⁴⁵ Schreiner Pg. 159

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 3:9-20

If you had thirty minutes to address the world on any subject, what subject would you choose? For the apostle Paul, it would probably be the subject that we find within this next section (3:9-20), the subject of the universal problem of sin. This is one of most important sections of this entire letter to the Romans. As one studies through this section, he is shocked to realize that this doctrine of sin has been redefined by today's Christian culture. As a result of this redefinition, the gospel message of today has become unclear or even unknown. Today people are redefining sin as simply, "missing the mark." However, Paul reveals that sin is not just a deed of "missing the mark"; it also has a nature. Sin's nature, according to Paul, is more than doing a bad deed; it is an evil power that controls the hearts of all unsaved mankind. In this powerful section, Paul is going to expose several truths about sin. One of the most important to Paul is the fact that sin has contaminated all mankind, both Jew and Gentile alike. Paul's teaching will portray how all mankind is in a helplessly condemned position before God and hopelessly unable to save himself. Paul makes it clear that neither Jews nor Gentiles are declared righteous based on their innate goodness; their nationality cannot make them acceptable in God's sight. Rather, all are under the controlling power of sin. Paul's powerful, eye-opening teaching unfolds as he exposes the problem, confirmation, and results of mankind's subjection under sin's power. May God help each reader look into his own heart to see where he stands in relationship to sin's evil nature!

The Problem: *Paul starts this powerful section by first exposing his reader to the problem that all mankind is under sin's power. He makes this known through his fifth and final question from the Jewish skeptics. As stated above, the previous section (3:1-8) addresses the first four questions. This fifth question (3:9) is separated from the other four because of Paul's shift of topic and focus from the Jews exclusively to both the Jews and Gentiles. Paul starts his argument by raising his question (3:9a), "Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)?" Then, he quickly and bluntly responds, "Not at all!" Wow, this would have not gone well with the religious Jew of Paul's day! This message was in direct contrast to the theology of the day. It is interesting to note how Paul was boldly and direct in his answer. After Paul gives his answer, he naturally follows up with an explanation. Paul makes it very clear to his reader that a Jew is no better than a Gentile since both are under sin's bondage. This is the first time Paul brings this teaching out directly. However, it will be discussed continuously from this point through chapter 8 (5:12, 6:6-7, 6:17-18, 22, 7:14, 8:2, etc.). By bringing this doctrine out, Paul is acting much like a physical doctor would. He first revealed the symptoms of man's behavior (1:18-2:16) and now he is pointing his reader to the root cause of man's behavior.*

The Confirmation: *After establishing the problem, Paul brings the confirmation to his readers that all mankind is indeed under sin's power. He does this by using the authority of God's Word to show how sin has affected mankind's behavior, speech, course of action, and view of God. The truth that sin has affected every area of mankind is very important. It has affected his thinking, his emotions, his plans, his reasoning, and every deed he does. Regarding man's general behavior, Paul shows how all of mankind is unrighteous, unable to understand God, unable to seek after God, unable to do any good, and has turned aside from God and become useless. Because of his sin, he is unable to come to God (see comment below for more details). Regarding man's speech, Paul shows his readers that sin has made man's mouth corrupt, deceitful, deadly, and full of cursing and bitterness. Furthermore, sin has made man's course of action to be one of killing, destruction, and misery, unknowledgeable to the path of peace. Lastly, sin has*

affected man's view of God, ultimately causing him to have no fear of Him whatsoever. John Calvin, the great Protestant reformer, commented on 3:18 by saying that he believed "All wickedness flows from a disregard for God."⁴⁶ He is saying that if man had a high view of God or saw Him rightly as He is, he would earnestly seek to live in subjection to His lordship. Yet, since the power of sin's nature has affected mankind's view of God, lowering it, man refuses to live in subjection under God's kingly authority as set forth in His Word (The Bible). Paul's point throughout this section (3:9-18) is that all mankind (both Jew and Gentile) – based on his behavior, tongue, course of action, and view of God – undeniably has a deadly disease called sin that controls his inward being, making him a prisoner to unrighteousness.

The Results: *Having revealed (3:9) and confirmed mankind's problem of sin (3:10-18), Paul now reveals the results (3:19-20) of man's problem of sin. Since Paul is responding to the skeptic's final question, he communicates the results from the perspective of the Law. When the Law speaks to a Jew it does two things. First, the Law closes every mouth, making him defenselessly guilty before God. Secondly, it makes the whole world accountable to God. The Bible scholar Douglas Moo comments, "The terminology of this clause reflects the imagery of the courtroom. 'Shutting the mouth' connotes the situation of the defendant who has no more to say in response to the charges brought against him or her. The Greek word translated 'accountable' . . . means 'answerable to' or 'liable to prosecution,' 'accountable.' Paul pictures God both as the one offended and as the judge who weighs the evidence and pronounces the verdict. The image, then, is of all humanity standing before God, accountable to him for willful and inexcusable violations of his will, awaiting the sentence of condemnation that their actions deserve."⁴⁷ This is exactly the situation that Paul wanted to create: for all mankind to realize his hopeless situation and to understand his need of the hope that Christ has provided. Have you really realized how helpless you are? Man's problem is more than that he does bad deeds – sin controls his inward being. Does sin control your inward being? May God help us honestly evaluate ourselves!*

OUTLINE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

II) The Bad News: Man is condemned and in need of the righteousness of God which comes through faith alone (1:18-3:20)

- D) The need for God's righteousness proven through Paul's teaching that all mankind is under sin and accountable to God (3:9-20)
 - 1) The problem of all mankind's subjection under the power of sin made evident through Paul's final questions from his hypothetical Jewish skeptics (3:9)
 - (a) Paul's final questions from his hypothetical Jewish skeptics (3:9a)
 - (i) What then? (3:9a)
 - (ii) Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles) (3:9a)
 - (b) Paul's answer to the Jewish skeptics final question (3:9b)
 - (i) Not at all (3:9b)
 - (c) Paul's explanation for why the Jews are not any better than the Jews (3:9c)
 - (i) Because (as Paul has already shown) both Jews and Greeks are all under sin's power (3:9c)
 - 2) The confirmation of all mankind's subjection under the power of sin made evident through the biblical explanation of sin's effects (3:10-18)

⁴⁶ Calvin Pg. 67 ~ John Calvin; the epistle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians. Translated by R. MacKenzie. Edited by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance. Calvin's Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

⁴⁷ Douglas Moo Pg. 205

- (a) Sin's power has affected all mankind's general behavior (3:10b-12)
 - (i) There is none righteous, not even one (3:10b)
 - (ii) There is none who understands, not even one (3:11a)
 - (iii) There is none who seek for God, not even one (3:11b)
 - (iv) All have turned aside and together have become useless (3:12a)
 - (v) There is none who does good, there is not even one (3:12b)
- (b) Sin's power has affected all mankind's speech (3:13-14)
 - (i) Their throat is an open grave (3:13a)
 - (ii) With their mouths they keep on deceiving (3:13b)
 - (iii) The poison of asps is under their lips (3:13c)
 - (iv) Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness (3:14)
- (c) Sin's power has affected all mankind's course (3:15-17)
 - (i) Their feet are swift to shed blood (3:15)
 - (ii) Destruction and misery are in their paths (3:16)
 - (iii) The path of peace they have not known (3:17)
- (d) Sin's power has effected all mankind's view of God (3:18)
 - (i) There is no fear of God before their eyes (3:18)
- 3) The results of all mankind's subjection under the power of sin made evident through what we know from the Law (3:19-20)
 - (i) We know that the Law speaks to those under the Law (3:19a)
 - (ii) We know that the Law speaks to those under the Law for two purposes (3:19b)
 - 1. It speaks so that every mouth will be stopped (3:19b)
 - 2. It speaks so that all the world may become accountable to God (3:19b)
 - a. Paul's explanation as to why every mouth must stop and become accountable before God (3:20a)
 - i. Through the works of the Law no flesh will be saved (3:20a)
 - b. Paul's clarification regarding why no flesh can be saved through the Law (3:20b)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. What question is being asked in verse 9a?
2. What is Paul's response to his question in verse 9b?
3. According to verse 9, who is under sin?
4. What do you think Paul means when he says that by mankind "are all under sin?"
5. Why do you think the purpose is behind Paul writing "as it is written," followed by Old Testament quotations?

6. What do you think Paul is saying when he says, “There is none righteous, not even one?”
7. In verse 11, what do you think Paul is saying when he says, “There is none who understands?”
8. According to verse 11, do men seek after God?
9. In verse 12, from whom do you think these men turned away?
10. In what sense do you think that Paul is saying men have become useless?
11. According to verse 12, is man good?
12. Do you think man is capable of doing any good?
13. How does God’s Word describe the throat?
14. What do you think Paul means by the throat being “an open grave?”
15. What does verse 12 say about man’s tongue?
16. According to verse 13, man’s mouth is full of what?
17. What are man’s feet quick to do, according to verse 15?
18. What two words describe man’s path in verse 16?
19. Which path does God’s Word say mankind has never known?
20. What does verse 18 say about man’s perspective of God?

21. According to verse 19, for what two purposes does the Law (or Old Testament) speak to those under the Law (Jews)?
22. What do you think Paul means by “every” mouth?
23. Why do you think the Law closes every mouth?
24. How do you think the Law shows that all the world is accountable to God?
25. What do you think Paul is trying to say by his use of the phrase “all the world” in verse 19?
26. What reason does verse 20a provide for why the Law stops every mouth and makes the world accountable to God?
27. What does verse 20 say the Law will not do for mankind?
28. What do you think it means to be justified in God’s sight?
29. According to verse 20b, what explanation does Paul give for why no man is justified in God’s sight?
30. What knowledge does verse 20 say comes through the Law?

MEDITATION ON PAUL’S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL’S MESSAGE:

What does Paul mean when he says, “both Jews and Greeks are all under sin”? (3:9) This statement is an extremely important question. This statement reveals the source of all mankind’s problems. The philosopher is wrong; the source of mankind’s problem is not lack of education. The psychologist is also wrong; the source of man’s problem is not his damaged inner child or lack of felt needs being met. The politician missed the problem also; mankind’s problem is not a lack of strong leadership. Our problem is called sin. It is from this problem that God sent His Son Jesus Christ to save mankind! But what is so bad about sin that it caused the Creator of the universe to leave the heavens to come to the aid of His creation? Paul’s words here reveal just how horrific (terrible) sin is. Paul says we are “under sin.” What does it mean to be under sin? The word “under” was a common Greek term that did not just mean to be beneath something, but meant to be totally under the power, authority, and control of something or someone.⁴⁸ Donald Barnhouse says, “To be under sin is much more than missing the mark, or overstepping a boundary, or any of the other phrases. . . . To be under sin means to be dominated by sin, to be under its power, under its rule, under its empire, under its sway, under its control.”⁴⁹ According to Douglas Moo, to be “under sin” means that “Jews as well as Gentiles, were not just sinners but helpless pawns (captives) under sin’s power.”⁵⁰ This is exactly in line with the picture that Paul presents sin to be from here on out. He pictures sin to be a helpless slave under the brutal tyranny of his master.⁵¹ For example, in Romans 6:6, 17 Paul speaks of mankind, before being changed by Christ, as being “slaves of sin” and after being changed by Christ, as “having been set free from sin (Romans 6:7, 18, 22).” This is the pervasive thought that is revealed throughout all the Scriptures (John 8:34, 32; Eph 2:1-4; Col 2:13; Titus 3:3-7). Douglas Moo once again rightfully says, “the problem with people is not just that they commit sins; their problem is that they are enslaved to sin. What is needed, therefore, is a new power to break in and set people free from sin—a power found in, and only in, the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁵² Douglas Moo is 100% in line with Paul’s thinking. That is why Paul says in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation.” Unfortunately, Paul’s gospel is hard to find within the lips of God’s preachers today, because it has been replaced with the new 21st century gospel. One of the major truths missing is this reality about man’s bondage or depravity, which was so common 100 years ago.⁵³ Regardless, may God help us to

⁴⁸ The MacArthur New Testament Bible Commentary on Romans Pg. 180

⁴⁹ Barnhouse Pg. 199

⁵⁰ Douglas Moo Pg. 201

⁵¹ With that said, Leon Morris (through quoting from Augustine) points out that this slavery to sin is worse than other forms of slavery: “At times a man’s slave, worn out by the commands of an unfeeling master, finds rest in flight. Whither can the servant of sin flee? Himself he carries with him wherever he flees. An evil conscience flees not from itself; for the sin he commits is within. He has committed sin to obtain some bodily pleasure. The pleasure passes away; the sin remains. What delighted is gone; the sting has remained behind. Evil bondage!” Leon Morris Pg.458

⁵² Douglas Moo Pg 201

⁵³ Leon Foster’s *New Cyclopaedia of Prose Illustrations* (Crowell Pg 696) powerfully reflects a true description and accurately describes man’s greatest enemy, sin:

It is a debt, a burden, a thief, a sickness, a leprosy, a plague, poison, a serpent, a sting; everything that man hates it is; a load of curses, and calamities beneath whose crushing most intolerable pressure, the whole creation groaneth....

Who is the hoary sexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is this sorceress that first deceives, and then damns his soul? - Sin.

Who with icy breath, blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men’s grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? - Sin.

reload Paul's message within our own hearts that it may be heard loudly and clearly within God's church and world today.

What is the relationship between Paul's statement "both Jew and Greek are all under sin" and his quotations from the Old Testament? These Old Testament quotations are set forth by Paul to provide a confirmation of Paul's statement that all men are "under sin." Therefore, Paul uses the effects of sin to prove the existence of sin. Paul's argument is kind of like proving a fruit tree by showing people its fruit. Furthermore, as one looks closely at sin's fruit, one is awakened to how helpless his condition really is!

What are the effects of sin's existence for all of mankind? As stated above, sin has affected every area of mankind. It has affected his thinking, his emotions, his plans, his reasoning, and every single deed. This is made evident by just looking at verses 10-12 and seeing the five terrifying truths these verses reveal. First, we see that sin has affected everyone's standing with God. Paul declares, "there is none righteous, not even one." That is to say, there is no one righteous in accordance with man's moral standards, because all of mankind is unholy, stained with sin, and completely unlike God in His perfection. This truth is most sobering when you consider the fact that the Old Testament reveals that God cannot stand to be around sin. The second terrifying truth is that "there is none who understands." The idea here is that an unbeliever is unable to accurately see or determine spiritual truth. Because sin has affected his thinking, mankind cannot correctly make out the path that leads to God (I Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; I Tim 1:13; Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:1-7). One renowned preacher said, "Just as the physically blind cannot see the sun, the spiritually blind cannot see the Son (of God)."⁵⁴ The third and fourth terrifying truths regarding sin's effects are that "there is none who seeks for God," but instead they "all have turned aside, together they have become useless." To the surprise of the 21st century ear, mankind cannot come to God, because sin's nature kills man's ability to come to God, annihilating (destroying) even his inward desire and mental ability to do so (Romans 8:7; Luke 18:26-27; John 6:44). Therefore, Paul reveals here that mankind does not come to God because he does not desire to seek Him. Rather, mankind has willfully chosen to turn aside from God and has become of no value to God and his purposes. As Isaiah put it, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each have turned to his own way" (53:6). Some say, "Why does mankind appear to be religious, if he does not seek God?" The answer to this good question is that man's religiosity is not man's passion to seek the one true God, but is most often a reflection of man's pursuit and worship of the god of his own making (which is shown clearly in chapter one). The last

Who, by a more hideous metamorphosis than Ovid even fancied, changes gentle children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocents? - Sin.

Who casts the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war, and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by divisions in the church rends Christ's seamless robe? - Sin.

Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazirite asleep and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who with winning smiles on her face, honey flattery on her tongue, stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality and when suspicion sleeps, treacherously pierces our temples with a nail? What fair siren is this who seated on a rock by the deadly pool smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray, and flings her arm around her neck to leap with us into perdition? - Sin.

Who turns the soft and gentlest heart to stone? Who hurls reason from her lofty throne, and impels sinners, mad as Gadarene swine, down the cliff, into a lake of fire? - Sin.

⁵⁴ The MacArthur New Testament Bible Commentary on Romans Pg. 185

terrifying truth revealed in verse 10-12 is that “there is none who does good, there is not even one.” When it comes to man’s ability to evaluate himself, it is clear that man’s perception is hindered by his environment. This truth is made most clear by Paul’s statement regarding man’s inability to do any good. It is a common belief that man is essentially good, but God’s Word tell us that sin has affected every deed that mankind ever does. Often our deeds are motivated by self-glory or advancement and not for others, resulting in the exaltation of God once we realize it. This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet recognized when he came face to face with God in Isaiah 6:5. He cries out, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lip, and live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” As one looks closely just at sin’s effects recorded in 3:10-12, one can’t help but agree with Isaiah, “Woe is me, for I am ruined!”

What does Paul mean when he says, “there is no fear of God before their eyes”? Paul’s words from this section (3:9-20) can be pictured as a tree: The seed or root problem of man is a sin nature, which produces a trunk that has no fear for God, resulting in the fruit of sin’s deeds. Therefore, the words, “there is no fear of God before their eyes,” indicates the stump from which all of man’s evil deeds give birth. It is the eyes that direct the steps of a man, and the eyes of man refuse to see God for who He really is. If man saw God for who He is, it would have brought about a true yearning for reconciliation with Him. Man’s life is shown to be a reflection of the truth he embraces about God. That is why A.W. Tozer was correct when he said, “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”⁵⁵

Why, in verse 20, does the Law speak to those under the Law and not to all mankind directly? The Law speaks to those under the Law because the Law was given to the Jews not to the Gentiles. Within God’s plan, the people of Israel were to be a kingdom of priests to the nations (Exodus 19:6). That is, Israel was to communicate the message about the one and only God to the world, thus enabling the world to know God through His revelation to Israel. Here in verse 20, Paul shows us this message communicated by the Law, namely: “You are unrighteous and guilty before God.” The Philistines got this message when over 50,000 of their men died, after looking in the ark of God when it was stolen from the Israelites. I Samuel 6:20 tell us that the Philistines responded by saying, “Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?” They knew the answer was, “No one is able to stand.” The problem was that until Paul, Israel failed to communicate the message of the Law.

What is Paul’s conclusion in verses 19 and 20? In Paul’s conclusion, he gives his reader two concluding messages that the Law speaks to the Jews regarding all mankind. The first conclusion is that every mouth is closed. This is suggesting that the law makes man defenseless. Mankind sees the facts of his guilt and is therefore unable to give any word of response to his own defense. He knows he is guilty and he knows that there is no way out of his deserved punishment. The second conclusion is that the Law brings the whole world under judgment. The Law causes the whole world to defenselessly await God’s future retribution. Paul’s reason for giving these two conclusions is to emphasize the fact that the law does not save man, but only reveals man’s dreadful position before God. Paul makes it unmistakably clear that it is impossible for man to earn his salvation through his obedience or moral adherence to God’s requirements.

⁵⁵ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* Pg.1 Harper Collins Publication 1961

UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE: ROMANS 3:21-4:25

As the common saying goes, we don't want to miss the forest in the midst of the trees. Therefore, it is important that we be reminded of the big picture of Paul's argument so that we don't get lost in the midst of the specifics. Stated once more, the big picture of Paul's argument or the thesis statement is why it is that only the righteousness man who shall live (eternally) by faith (1:17). Paul defends his thesis statement by showing his readers that mankind is in need of a righteousness that is outside of himself (1:18-3:20). Paul has been showing his readers that mankind is not righteous. Neither the non-religious (or the Gentiles) (1:18-32), nor the religious (2:1-16), nor even the Jews, despite all their covenantal blessings (2:17-3:8), are righteous. All mankind – both Jew and Gentile – are unrighteous and in need of a righteousness outside of themselves, because all mankind is under the damning problem called sin (3:9-20). This sin problem has taken control of every part of mankind, having enslaved and imprisoned them to both sin and death. Therefore, mankind is helplessly and hopelessly condemned before God with no deliverance in sight by the end of 3:20. However, in 3:21 Paul brings in the good news through his famous transitional statement “but now.” Starting in 3:21, Paul shows his reader that there is hope, but this hope is found outside of mankind; our only hope is in the righteousness that God has provided to all mankind through the work of Christ on the cross (3:21-26). The great converted Catholic priest and renowned Protestant reformer Martin Luther wrote in the margin of his Bible that this truth (3:21-26) is “the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible.”⁵⁶ Martin Luther was exactly right! Paul shows us that God has provided a righteousness outside of the Law whereby all mankind can be saved. After Paul delivers this incredible news, Paul leads his readers to see two other facts about God's gospel more clearly. The first truth is that this gospel takes away all human boasting (3:27-4:8). Paul brings out this truth before his readers because of the false teaching Paul had experienced in Judaism. He wants his readers to clearly understand that they have nothing in which to boast, because they did not earn anything but were freely given all. The second truth Paul especially emphasizes is that this gospel of God's righteousness is available to all mankind, both Jew and Gentile (4:9-25), again addressing his previous exposure to Judaism's false teaching. He makes it clear once and for all through the life of Abraham that God has provided His good news for all to benefit.

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 3:21-26

Within the history of the world, mankind has delivered many memorable and life changing speeches. One, example is Martin Luther King Jr. 's speech in 1963, which is considered one of the greatest and most notable speeches in human history. In that speech, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of his desire for a future where blacks and whites would coexist harmoniously as equals. Regarding Martin Luther King Jr., one man commented, “Dr. King had the power, the ability and the capacity to transform those steps on the Lincoln Memorial into a monumental area that will be forever recognized.”⁵⁷ Another example is Abraham Lincoln 's Gettysburg Address, which is known as one of the greatest speeches in American history. In this two-minute speech, Lincoln called the American people to “a new birth of freedom” that would bring true equality to all of its citizens.⁵⁸ These two speeches are known for bringing reconciliation between the white and black people within America. However, it can be argued that the greatest speech ever delivered within human history is the one delivered by the great apostle Paul, right here in Romans 3:21-26. Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Lincoln 's speeches may have aided to reconcile mankind

⁵⁶ Douglas Moo, 218

⁵⁷ I have a dream, from Wikipedia

⁵⁸ Abraham Lincoln From Wikipedia

to each other, but the apostle's Paul's message has aided to reconcile sinful man to his Holy God. These four verses are the most poignant and powerful verses ever penned – in them contain the good news! In these verses, Paul provides a declaration, explanation, and description that can, by God's grace, transform the life of any person.

Before we look at Paul's declaration, explanation and description, it is necessary that we quickly understand what makes God's announcement of the good news so incredible. Imagine if you died today and had to stand before God as your judge (as all mankind will one day have to do). Every single thought, emotion, and deed was laid open before God. Due to God's holiness, each one of your sins brought total embarrassment, humiliation, and terror because you knew you were guilty and condemned. Since you knew God's Word, you knew that the consequences of these sins brought with it eternal punishment. Therefore, with total recognition of your hopelessly lost condition, you fall to your knees in despondency and cry out, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!"⁵⁹ Then, in the reality of your despair, you look into God's wrathful eyes and scream in anguish, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!"⁶⁰ Then all of a sudden, God's face changes, and He comes over to you and picks you up and takes all of your sin and forgives it, declaring you to be right with him, even though you have lived a life of sin and even though you are clearly guilty. Thus, forgiving us of our sins and legally declaring of us to be right with God is exactly what our passage before us (3:21-26) is suggesting that God does for each person who truly puts his faith in Him while he or she is still living.⁶¹ This righteousness belongs to God and was achieved through Jesus Christ's perfect obedience here on earth. Furthermore, this righteousness is what is given to mankind so that they can stand before God in a right standing. All the while, man's sin is given to Jesus Christ and paid for on the cross. This exchange of our sin for His righteousness is known in theological terms as imputation.⁶² As we will see, this forgiveness and righteousness given to mankind so that he can stand in a right relationship before God is made available as a result of the work that God did through Christ. Now that we have laid this foundation let's look at the specifics of Paul thinking.

Paul's declaration: *Paul's declaration is provided in the midst of man's helpless situation (3:9-20). After finding out that man is under sin's power, condemned before God, and unable to change his horrible condition, Paul now declares the good news that God has provided His own righteousness for mankind through Jesus Christ. Paul starts off his declaration by announcing the good news that God has now revealed His own righteousness. Paul's announcement is introduced by the use of the formula, "But now." To these words, the famous preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones said, "There are no more wonderful words in the whole of Scripture than just these two words 'But now'."⁶³ He says this because he likens man's situation to a dark dungeon with no sign of escape until the light of the "But now" appears, transitioning man from the hopelessness of the Law to the hopefulness that only Christ can provide. Paul's announcement is quickly clarified by informing his reader of the fact that this good news of God's righteousness is not manifested through the Law (see comment below for details). Paul then moves to a three-fold description of God's righteousness, which God has now revealed through Christ. One, Paul says that the Law and the prophets witness God's righteousness (This statement balances out Paul's statement in verse 21 about the Law not manifesting God's Righteousness. See comment below!). Two,*

⁵⁹ Isaiah 6:5

⁶⁰ Luke 18:13

⁶¹ It should be noted that after death one is will not be forgiven, just judged in accordance with their deeds.

⁶² Wayne Grudem says in his Systematic Theology, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and God thinks of it as belonging to us. It is not our own righteousness but Christ's righteousness that is freely given to us. Pg. 726

⁶³ Martin Lloyd Jones Pg. 25 ~ D.M. Lloyd Jones Romans, Atonement and Justification, An exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25; Zondervan Publication Grand rapids MI 1970

*Paul says that God's righteousness is obtained through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Paul will discuss this in greater detail in the coming chapter). Three, Paul says that this righteousness is made available for all who believe (not just the Jew, but for the Jew and Gentile alike). That is to say, all mankind can obtain this righteousness, which does not belong to them but to God! They can obtain this righteousness as if it was their own. We don't have to try and earn a righteous standing before God (which is impossible), because God will credit His own righteousness to all mankind as if it has always belonged to him. Due to the importance of this topic to Paul, he feels the need to elaborate further on why this righteousness is available to all mankind and not just the Jew exclusively. He informs his reader that God's righteousness is available to all because with God there is no distinction. He continues by saying that there is no distinction because all mankind essentially has the same standing before God: both Jew and Gentile have sinned, and both fall short of God's glory. Douglas Moo comments, "Jews may have the Law and circumcision; Americans may lay claim to their great religious heritage; 'good' people may point to their charity; but all of this makes no essential difference to ones standing before the righteous and holy God."*⁶⁴

Paul's explanation: *From Paul's declaration of God's righteousness, he turns to his explanation of how mankind obtains God's righteousness or is justified.⁶⁵ It should be noted that this verse is dependent on verse 23 [because it modifies one or both of the verbs (sinned or fallen short) of verse 23] but it also picks up and continues the main theme of the paragraph from 3:21-22a.⁶⁶ In 3:24, Paul reveals three descriptions of how all mankind obtains this righteousness from God, or how all-sinful mankind is declared to be right before God. First, Paul tells us that God's righteousness is given freely, meaning that it is not acquired by the means of man's works, status, heritage or appeasement. Two, God's righteousness is received by means of His grace. This is the key to understanding God's gospel! As the leaders of the Protestant reformation put it, salvation is by "grace alone!" Paul is revealing in this statement that salvation from first to last is a matter of God's own doing! It is rightly commented that, "grace is indeed needed to turn a man into a saint; and he who doubts it does not know what a saint or mans is."⁶⁷ "God's justifying verdict is totally unmerited. People have done, and can do, nothing to earn it."⁶⁸ Lastly, Paul reveals that God's righteousness is received as a result of the redemption of Jesus Christ. This statement is saying that God's freely provided righteousness that is given to man still has a cost. However, the payment of that cost is not paid by man, but by God through the redemption of His Son Jesus! The term redemption means, "Release as a result of the payment of a price."⁶⁹ The imagery that this word brings to mind is that of a slave bought from a cruel master by means of a payment. This is exactly what Paul is speaking of here. Sin was the cruel master, which held us in bondage and the wages of our sin was death (Rom 6:23), so who would pay those wages? Here we find out that the answer is Jesus Christ. Cranfield comments, "The believer's righteous status has been brought about by means of a definite and decisive action on His (God's) own part." He continues, "the slavery from which this action of God has redeemed must be the slavery of sin in the sense of subjection to sin's effects, that is, to God's condemnation. God's wrath, the condition of having an unrighteous status before Him."⁷⁰*

⁶⁴ Moo pg. 226

⁶⁵ This word "Justified" means to be acquitted by God from all "charges" that could be brought against a person because of his or her sins (Moo Pg 227) or simply stated it means to be declared right or righteous in the sight of God.

⁶⁶ Douglas Moo Pg. 227

⁶⁷ Moo Pg. 228, 242

⁶⁸ Moo 228

⁶⁹ Lloyd Jones Pg. 61

⁷⁰ Cranfield Pg. 208-209 ~

Paul's description: *This redemption which was paid by Christ Jesus in verse 24, is discussed in more detail as Paul now transitions to his description of God's work in providing the good news of God's righteousness. Since mankind was not capable of paying the price for his own sin, the passage before us (3:24) reveals that God the Father intervened by sending God the Son. The passage now (3:25-26) explains both the work that God did to provide His righteousness to mankind (3:25a) and the purposes that God accomplished through that work (3:25b-26). As stated above, for God to provide his righteousness to mankind, He had to provide redemption. The necessity of this redemption is not only theological, but it is also logical. For example, if a judge lets a clearly guilty murderer go unpunished, without receiving the just penalty for his horrible actions, people would say that that judge is ungodly or unrighteous. In the same way, God would be unjust if he let believers go unpunished! Therefore, God had to intervene on man's behalf. In verse 25, we see that He did intervene as the Father publically displayed the Son, Christ Jesus, to propitiate (appease) God's wrath by means of his blood (Note: This verse 25 is connected to the word "Christ Jesus" by the word "whom"). By Paul's statement we see that it is God who takes the initiative in redemption, not Christ, and certainly not human beings. "The prime doer in Christ's cross was God. Christ was God's reconciling. He was God doing the very best for man, and not man doing the very best for God."⁷¹ To be an offering of propitiation is to be an offering that removes wrath. This verse is telling us that this is exactly what Jesus Christ did, through God the Father's initiative, for those who put their faith in Him. After explaining what God the Father did, Paul explains the purposes behind God's intervention. Paul explains the purpose from two different viewpoints. The first perspective is dealing with God's reputation regarding the past (3:25b). The second perspective is dealing with God's reputation at this present time (3:26). In the past, God looked over the sins previously committed by past believers (in the sense that he did not give past believers their ultimate deserved punishment), because his intention was to deal with them once and for all on the cross through Jesus Christ. However, the time before the provision of Jesus Christ calls God's goodness into question, because to not deal with one sin's indefinitely would be to condone evil. Therefore, by God offering up Jesus, He demonstrated to all mankind that He was righteous in the way he handled the past (3:25) and is also righteous (or just) in declaring sinners righteous (or justified) in all future dealings with mankind (3:26). Cranfield sums up 3:25-26 this way, "What Paul's statement that God purposed Christ as a propitiatory victim means is that God, because in His mercy He willed to forgive sinful men . . . that is without in any way condoning their sin, purposed to direct against His own very self in the person of His Son the full weight of that righteous wrath which they deserve."⁷² Simply stated, God has to punish man for their sin, because His nature cannot let sin go unpunished, so He took Jesus, who knew no sin, had Him become sin on mankind's behalf, so that mankind could righteously be declared to be right with God (2 Cor. 5:21)!*

OUTLINE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

III) The Good News: God's Righteousness has been revealed (3:21-3:26)

A) Paul's declaration of the good news of God's righteousness (3:21-23)

- 1) The good news: But now the righteousness of God has been revealed (3:21a)
 - (a) Paul's clarification regarding the revelation of the righteousness of God: It is not being revealed through the Law (3:21a)
- 2) The good news (3:21b-23)

⁷¹ Moo Pg. 209

⁷² Cranfield Pg.217

- (a) The righteousness of God is witnessed by the Old Testament (3:21b)
- (b) The righteousness of God is obtained through faith in Jesus Christ (3:22a)
- (c) The righteousness of God is made available for all who believe (3:22a)
 - (i) Paul's elaboration for why God's righteousness is made available for all who believe (3:22b-23)
 - 1. God's righteousness is available to all because there is no distinction (3:22b)
 - a. Both Jew and Gentile have sinned (3:23a)
 - b. Both Jew and Gentiles fall short of the glory of God (3:23b)
- B) Paul's explanation of how mankind obtains the good news of God's righteousness (3:24)
 - 1) Mankind obtains the good news of God's righteousness freely (3:24)
 - 2) Mankind obtains the good news of God's righteousness by God's grace (3:24)
 - 3) Mankind obtains the good news of God's righteousness through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (3:24)
- C) Paul's description of God's work in providing the good news of God's righteousness (3:25-26)
 - 1) God's work: God publically displayed Christ Jesus as a propitiation in his blood (3:25a)
 - 2) God's purposes (3:25b-26)
 - (a) God publically displayed Christ Jesus as a propitiation for the purpose of demonstrating (or showing) His righteousness in forgiving sinners in the past (3:25b)
 - (i) Paul's explanation of why God purposed to demonstrate His righteousness ~ looking at God's past actions: God purposed to demonstrate His righteousness because it was in question since He passed over the sins committed previously by past believers (3:25)
 - (b) God publically displayed Christ Jesus as a propitiation for the purpose of demonstrating (or showing) His righteousness in forgiving sinners in the present and future (3:26a)
 - (i) Paul's explanation of why God purposed to demonstrate His righteousness ~ looking at God's present actions (3:26b)
 - 1. Paul wanted to show that He is Just (or righteous) (3:26b)
 - 2. Paul wanted to show that He is justifier of those who put their faith in Jesus Christ (3:26b)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. What function do you think these words "but now" have on this sentence?
2. What do you think Paul means when he says that God's righteousness is revealed "apart from the Law?"
3. What three descriptions are given concerning this righteousness of God in verses 21-22?
4. According to verse 22, what is the means of obtaining this righteousness?

5. What do you think Paul means when he says that salvation is for “all those who believe?”
6. According to verse 23, why is salvation for all men without distinction?
7. According to verse 24, what three descriptions are given for how a man is justified or legally declared once and for all right with God?
8. What do you think Paul means when he says that we are justified “freely” or “as a gift?”
9. What do you think Paul means when he says that we are justified “by His grace?”
10. What does verse 24 say as to what act enabled us to be justified (declared not guilty)?
11. What does verse 25 say God did for mankind?
12. What do you think the word “propitiation” means?
13. According to verse 25, who did God display publically as a propitiation?
14. Through what event do you think God purposed Jesus Christ to be a propitiatory sacrifice?
15. Why did God purpose Jesus to die on the cross as a propitiatory sacrifice?
16. In what way do you think this event proved or demonstrated God’s righteousness?
17. If God freely let sins go without dying for them or paying a price for them, what do you think that would have revealed about God?
18. In what way has God revealed Himself to be “just”?
19. In what has God revealed Himself to be a “justifier”?

20. According to verse 26, to whom is God a justifier?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?

2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

What does it mean that God's righteousness is manifested "apart from the Law"? Paul uses this statement in contrast to the message he had just made in 3:20, which said that through the Law came the knowledge of sin. Therefore, Paul is saying that it is outside of this sin-revealing Law that God has chosen to manifest His own righteousness. Instead, God has chosen to manifest His righteousness through a different means: through the person of Jesus Christ. Although the Law did not manifest the full understanding of God's righteousness, Paul reveals that the Law still was a witness to its future existence. Schreiner comments, "The saving righteousness of God has become a reality through the work of Jesus Christ, not through the Mosaic Law. It does not follow from this that the OT is an inferior revelation. The OT itself promises again and again that God will fulfill His saving promises and looks forward to the day when they will become a reality."⁷³ The "'Law,' then, refers to the 'Mosaic covenant,' that (temporary) administration set up between God and His people to regulate their lives and reveal their sin until the establishment of the promise in Christ."⁷⁴

What is this glory of which we fall short that is mentioned in verse 23? It is believed that before the fall in the Garden of Eden, mankind shared in God's divine glory. As a result of sin (which is missing the mark of God's holy standard) mankind fails to obtain this illumination any longer (neither believers nor unbelievers). Nonetheless, the Bible promises us that in heaven those who place their faith in Jesus Christ will be restored to this glory (Rom. 5:2; 8:18, 21, 30; Isa. 35:2; Phil. 3:21; 2 Thess. 2:14). Although on this earth no man will be restored to the previous glory he once had, there is still a relative glory into which believers are being changed (2 Cor. 3:18).⁷⁵

What is this righteousness of God mentioned throughout this section? This was discussed with detail in the comments under Romans 1:17, but a few more comments should be made. The righteousness of God is sister to God's holiness. God's righteousness is God's sinlessness in relationship to the law. Jesus's life of obedience on earth (His fulfillment of the Law) has made it possible for mankind to be credited, or declared perfect, in relationship to the Law. These verses in Romans help unfold some marvelous truths concerning this righteousness. There are three truths revealed. One, this righteousness has been revealed by the Old Testament prophets (v. 21). Two, this righteousness is through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ (v. 22). Three, this righteousness is available for all those who believe (v. 22).

⁷³ Schreiner, 180

⁷⁴ Moo Pg. 223 ~See also Romans 4:13-15; 5:20; and Gal. 3:15-4:7

⁷⁵ Cranfield 204,205

According to this section, how is this righteousness acquired? This is extremely important for us to see, since our souls are eternally dependent on this truth. This truth is most vividly clear in verse 24. This verse clearly states that the reason we are made righteous in God's sight is because God has freely (as a gift) given His righteousness to us. The motivation behind God's gift of righteousness is His grace, not our works or any other manmade contribution. Lastly, the gift of His righteousness is made possible through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Having said this, verses 22, 25, and 26 all reveal that God has made a demand on man for this righteousness to be credited, which is their faith in Him. Having said that, Ephesians 2:8-9, makes it clear that we are saved through a faith that is not of ourselves but is a gift of God, so that man is unable to boast. Therefore, each of these verses reveals that God's righteousness is by means of *grace alone* through *faith alone* because of *Christ alone!*

What do the words justify, redemption, and propitiation mean? The verb *to justify* means to declare not guilty or righteous. It is a gracious act of God whereby he legally declares a sinner just (or right) or set free from the punishment of his sin, being no longer condemned (solely on the basis of Jesus Christ's accomplished mediatorial work).⁷⁶ Douglas Moo comments on the word by saying, "Paul uses the verb 'justify' (*dikaioo*) for the first time in Romans to depict his distinctive understanding of Christian salvation. As Paul uses it in these contexts, the verb 'justify' means not 'to make righteous' (in an ethical sense) nor simply 'to treat as righteous' (though one is really not righteous), but 'to declare righteous.' No 'legal fiction,' but a legal *reality* of the utmost significance, 'to be justified' means to be acquitted by God from all 'charges' that could be brought against a person because of his or her sins."⁷⁷ The word *redemption*, which occurs 10 times in the New Testament (Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24; 8:23; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15; 11:35), indicates deliverance, by means of the expense of a ransom or payment. Each time this word is used, the deliverance is from guilt, punishment, and the power of sin.⁷⁸ The ransom or payment is always through the costly, voluntary shedding of blood by our Savior Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it should be noted that "God, the judge who must render just verdicts, is the recipient of the ransom."⁷⁹ The word *propitiation* is a sacrifice that results in the removal of God's wrath. This term comes from the Old Testament and is used to describe an innocent lamb that was killed for the sins of the people of Israel. The sacrifice of this lamb atoned for the sins of the people, thus appeasing God's wrath against the people's sin. This sacrifice of appeasement is called a *propitiatory sacrifice*. Therefore, Paul is using these words to show how God's wrath is removed through the price of Jesus's sacrifice on the altar of the cross, and man is delivered from the consequences of his sin by faith in Jesus Christ.

Do the Catholic and Protestant churches agree doctrinally regarding how a man is saved today? The answer to this question is, absolutely no! Despite the many discussions about reconciliation, the Catholic Church still will not privately or publically renounce its false beliefs regarding how a man is made right with God. The Catholic Church holds to the same belief that it did during the much needed protest by the reformers (known in history as the Protestant Reformation); the belief that human beings need to cooperate with God's grace in order to be made righteous. More specifically,

⁷⁶ Hendriksen 130

⁷⁷ Moo Pg. 227

⁷⁸ Hendriksen 131

⁷⁹ Moo Pg. 230

the Catholic Church believes that through one faithfully performing the sacraments (most of them of which are nowhere recorded within the pages of Scripture) God will apply His grace and make him right with God. If one fails to faithfully perform the sacraments, God will not apply His saving grace. This idea of salvation is totally foreign to Scripture and must be wholeheartedly rejected. Therefore, for the sake of God's gospel, the Protestant Church must continue to protest this false teaching and call the Catholic Church back to the biblical message, because the souls of people are dependent upon it. Douglas Moo rightfully comments, "Despite important and welcome moves toward reconciliation between Protestants and Roman Catholics, the division between the two groups over justification remains. In an age that minimizes doctrine, there is a danger that this difference will be too easily swept under the carpet. But it is a significant one, affecting one's understanding of salvation, the sacraments, assurance, and other matters both doctrinal and practical."⁸⁰ With that said, the Protestant Church's attitude to Catholic Church should be one of love and benevolence, not one of pride and arrogance. It is understandable that the churches at times need to unite for social or political issues, but it is very important that these ventures be done with much caution and fear (Jude 1:23).

Is the Christian Church today still holding to the biblical gospel? The answer to the question is, yes and no! It is clear that today much or most of the church has lost a clear understanding of the gospel. Very few today have even heard of the good news of God's righteousness. The majority of the Evangelical Church as a whole does not clearly understand man's sin, God's grace, or how a man is made right with God. There are many false beliefs that have become mainstream with "Christianity" today. One such belief is what commonly called the "Prosperity Gospel," the idea that God came to bring prosperity and an abundant life. Another false idea is the idea that if a man wants to be saved all he has to do is say the "Sinner's Prayer" or he just needs to "accept Jesus into his heart." These ideas are pervasive within God's church but are totally foreign to Scripture and need to be pushed outside the boundaries of Evangelicalism. The biblical gospel is clearly dying within God's Church and the rate at which it is dying should be of great concern. However, as with Israel, God will always keep a remnant, which will be wholly devoted to God and to His gospel. But just like in the 1500's, there is another need for another Protestant Reformation!

What is Paul saying in verses 25-26? The point of these verses is to show how God purposed Jesus to be proof that He is righteous. Paul reveals the problem that God had passed over the sins of the Old Testament believers. This act made God seem as if He was unrighteous, because as the judge of the universe He cannot let sin go unpunished (just like a judge today can not let a murderer go free). Since sin is evil, it must be punished. To not punish sin is to agree with the evil and thus partake in the evil. Therefore, by God passing over previous sin without punishment made God seem unrighteous. Paul is saying that through God's provision of Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice, he has provided a just penalty for the sins of all those he has and will pass over. This blood-spilt sacrifice has made it known to the world that God is indeed righteous!

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 3:27-4:8

Paul delivers a fascinatingly fearful statement in Philippians 3:3 regarding the characteristics of a true believer. He says that a true Christian does three things. One, he worships in the Spirit of God. Two, he glories (or boasts) in Christ Jesus. Three, he puts no confidence in the flesh. These last two

⁸⁰ Moo Pg. 243

characteristics are the most interesting of all. Notice that Paul does not say that a true Christian puts only a little confidence in the flesh and most of his confidence in Jesus Christ. Paul says that a true Christian puts absolutely no confidence in the flesh. As one studies Apostle Paul's letters, one finds out that these truths are extremely important to him. Or stated differently, one finds out that the end goal of Paul's gospel (which he received from God) is to silence his recipients of all personal boasting. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that salvation is by grace through faith and not as a result of man's works so that man cannot boast. 1 Corinthians 1:28-31 says that God has chosen the base (immoral) and despised things of the world so that no man may boast before God. Paul declares that if a man is to boast, let him **BOAST IN THE LORD!** Again in Galatians 6:14, the apostle says, "But may it never be that I may boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Paul's teaching makes it very clear that those who have truly understood and trusted in God's gospel boast only in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the exact teaching of the great apostle Paul in these verses before us (3:27-4:8).

In these verses, Paul transitions from presenting the good news (3:21-26) to man's response in light of the good news (3:27-4:8). The main focus of Paul's whole discussion is why the gospel removes personal boasting from the heart of a true believer. Paul's defense regarding the exclusion of personal boasting can be broken down into two main arguments. One, man's boasting should be excluded from true believers because God's righteousness has been declared to them by faith and not works (3:27-31). Two, man's boasting should be excluded from true believers because God's righteousness has been credited to him, like Abraham, and not earned by man (4:1-8).

Paul's main theme in 3:27-31 is that all personal boasting must be excluded. The main argument that he uses to defend the need to dissolve personal bragging is that **God's righteousness is declared to true believers by faith not works**. This section begins with the transition to man's response to the good news by means of a question and a quick answer. Paul's question is, "Where then is boasting?" Paul's quick and sharp answer is, "It is excluded!" Despite man's passion for self-exaltation, Paul makes it clear that there is no place for it in light of the gospel. After Paul answers the question of personal boasting, he follows up with the reason for why boasting should be removed. Paul's basis for why personal boasting should be removed is the fact that mankind is not made righteous through his own works but through God's gracious gift of faith. Paul makes this clear by raising and answering another question. The question is: by what kind of law is boasting removed? Paul's answer is: by the law of faith. That is to say, mankind does not earn God's righteousness by means of performing works, but by the principle of his God-given faith. Paul's quick answer leads into a discussion of defense proving that man is saved by faith at the exclusion of human works. He defends this central doctrine by a statement of common belief, followed up by two arguments of defense. The first argument of defense Paul uses is the truth that there is only one God for all mankind. By this understanding, Paul, by implication is saying that since there is one God for all mankind, man must be saved on the basis of faith and not works of the Law. If the works of the Law saved man, then only Jews could be saved because they were the only ones with the Law. The second argument of defense nullifies the idea that being declared righteous by faith makes the Law unnecessary. Paul responds to this objection by making it clear that the Law is still useful today and that his teaching regarding faith actually establishes the credibility of the Law's truths. Paul might also be making an inference to his later teaching (Romans 8:4) about God's righteousness and its work of literally fulfilling in the believer the requirements of the Law, which takes place through the work of Christ.

In chapter four, Paul continues the same theme that mankind has no grounds on which to boast (as evidenced by 4:2), but switches the basis of his argument to Abraham and the truth that **God's**

righteousness is credited to mankind and not earned (4:1-8). Much like the previous section above, Paul's argument is introduced by a question followed by an answer. The question in essence asked what light the life of Abraham brings into this subject of boasting (determined by 4:2). Paul's answer is that Abraham has nothing to boast about before God! Paul's thinking is that if Abraham had worked for righteousness, he would have had something to boast about. However, since he did not receive God's righteousness by works, he has nothing to boast about before God. Paul affirms this teaching by reminding his readers of the truth that it was Abraham's belief that resulted in him being credited righteousness. This statement becomes the source of Paul's defense through the remaining part of this section. Paul in 4:4-5 logically shows his reader that if God's righteousness is credited to man, it cannot be earned or used for boasting purposes. Paul finishes his argument by appealing to the second most renowned figure in Israel's history, King David. He points out that King David also knew the joy of being credited righteousness that he did not deserve (4:6-8).

OUTLINE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

IV) The Response to the good news: Paul's clarification on issues pertaining to Justification (3:27-4:25)

- A) The issue of personal boasting: Two reasons why personal boasting should be removed (3:27-4:8)
 - 1) Man's boasting should be excluded from true believers because God's righteousness has been declared to mankind by faith and not works (3:27-31)
 - (a) The question regarding boasting: "Where then is boasting?" (3:27a)
 - (b) The answer regarding boasting: "It is excluded" (3:27b)
 - (c) The reason behind why boasting is excluded (3:27c-27d)
 - (i) The reason raised by means of questions (3:27)
 - 1. Question #1: "By what kind of law?" (3:27c)
 - 2. Question #2: "Of works?" (3:27d)
 - (ii) The reason answered by means of a statement: Boasting must be excluded by the Law (or principle) of faith (3:27e)
 - 1. Paul's quick discussion pertaining to the law of faith (3:28-31)
 - a. Paul's explanation affirming that mankind is declared righteous by faith: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (3:28)
 - b. Paul's arguments of defense affirming that a man is made righteous by means of faith (3:29-31)
 - i. Paul's first argument of defense is that God is the God of all mankind (3:29-30)
 - ii. Paul's second argument of defense is that faith does not nullify the Law but fulfills it (3:31)
 - 2) Man's boasting should be excluded from true believers because, like Abraham, God's righteousness has been credited to him and not earned (4:1-8)
 - (a) The question regarding boasting in light of Abraham: What then have we found from Abraham? (4:1)
 - (b) The answer regarding Abraham's boasting: Abraham has nothing to boast about before God (4:2)

- (c) The answer regarding Abraham's inability to boast before God affirmed (4:3)
 - (i) The affirmation of Abraham's inability to boast provided by means of a question: "For what does the Scripture say?" (4:3a)
 - (ii) The affirmation about Abraham's inability to boast provided by means of an answer: "Abraham believed God and it was credited to Him as righteousness" (4:3b)
 - (iii) The affirmation of Abraham's inability to boast provided by means of an explanation which distinguishes the meaning of being credited from being given what is due (4:4-5)
 - 1. Paul's logical reasoning confirming the fact that Abraham did not work for his credited righteousness (4:4)
 - 2. Paul's logical reasoning confirming the fact that Abraham was credited righteousness by means of faith (4:5)
 - (iv) The affirmation about Abraham's inability to boast provided by means of another example: Israel's most renowned king, David (4:6-8)
 - 1. Paul's statement confirming that King David was credited righteousness apart from works (4:6)
 - 2. David's own statement confirming his being credited righteousness apart from works (4:7-8)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. What do you think Paul means by "boasting," in 3:27?
2. According to Paul in 3:27, what is to be done with personal boasting for the Christian?
3. On what basis should boasting be done away with, according to verse 27?
4. What do you think Paul is trying to say in 3:28?
5. According to 3:29, does God have a relationship with the Gentiles (non-Jews)?
6. Why do you think Paul makes the point that God has a relationship with Jews and Gentiles?
7. By what means does God have a relationship with both the Jews and Gentiles (see v. 30)?
8. According to verse 31, what is Paul's answer to the question that the Law is useless since we are saved by faith?

9. In what way do you think faith establishes the Law?
10. Why do you think Paul turns his reader's attention to Abraham in 4:1?
11. What question is Paul asking his readers in 4:1?
12. What do you think Paul is saying in verse 2?
13. How do you think verses 1 and 2 relate with Paul's question in 3:27?
14. According to verse 3, what is the result of Abraham's belief in God?
15. How do you think verse 4 relates with verse 3?
16. What do you think verse 4 is trying to say?
17. According to verse 5, how is a man credited God's righteousness?
18. Who is the One who justifies the ungodly (declares the ungodly to be in right standing) (3:26)?
19. What does King David speak about, according to verse 6?
20. Why do you think Paul alludes to King David?
21. What does verse 6 say God is doing?
22. What happened to the blessed man's deeds in verse 7a?
23. What happened to the blessed man's sins in verse 7b?

24. What happened to the blessed man's sins in verse 8?

25. What do you think Paul is trying to say in Romans 4:1-8?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
2. In what ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

What does Paul mean by "law of faith?" This statement is being contrasted with the law of works, referring to the Law of Moses. Therefore, Paul makes "a play on words" as he refers to the "law of faith." Therefore, this phrase should be understood metaphorically and can best be understood as "principle" or "rule".⁸¹ Therefore, this phrase is suggesting that it is through the principle of faith that there is no boasting. Stated differently, the context suggests that the principle of faith demands that man is unable to boast. What makes faith a principle through which man is unable to boast is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

It what sense do we establish the Law according to 3:31? The truth that "we establish the Law" has been interpreted many different ways. However, the actual meaning is quite simple. Paul is just saying that his teaching confirms or upholds the teaching of the Mosaic Law. The question asked is whether the teaching that a man is declared righteous by faith apart from works nullify (or abolish) the need for the Law. Paul is simply saying no way! Our teaching validates, endorses, supports, upholds, and confirms the usefulness and teaching of the Law. This seems to be the simplest way to understand Paul's intended meaning. However, Paul later teaches in Romans 8:4 that all the demands of the Law are accomplished or fulfilled in the believer, through the work of Jesus Christ on this earth. That is to say that before God, a believer appears to have fulfilled the Law's demands in its entirety because of Jesus' perfect obedience being credited to him. Therefore, some believe that this teaching is being inferred here in 3:31. Nevertheless, due to the limited information in Paul's statement, we cannot be certain that this was included in his intended meaning.

Where is boasting for a Christian? As Paul said, boasting is excluded or done away with for a believer. In what can a believer take pride? Everything has been provided to him. Even his faith is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9). A true Christian knows that everything is from God and gives God the proper praise and admiration due to Him. As Paul said in Philippians 3:3, a true Christian "glories in Christ Jesus and puts no confidence in the flesh." Again Paul says in Galatians 6:14, "May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When was the last time you exalted God and boasted in Him?

⁸¹ Douglas Moo Pg. 249

Is there boasting in God's "church" today? To find out in whom people are boasting, an insightful question to ask is, "If you were to go to heaven and God were to ask you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you say?" Too often today the answer to the question is, "I asked Christ into my heart!" or "I said the sinner's prayer!" or "I have been good!" or "I have loved you!" These answers though some may sound good are all wrong because they begin with the word, "I." We are not saved because we did anything! We are saved because Christ took our sin and credited His righteousness to us! Our salvation is all because of God and has nothing to do with "I."

How do these verses relate to the Protestant church's belief about salvation? The Protestant church teaches that a man is saved through faith alone, by the work of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. The Protestant church has always held to the belief that a Christian is a person who has his whole confidence for salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. For a Protestant, a Christian's entire hope and trust is completely outside of himself. Protestants believe that mankind is desperately wicked and totally unable to be saved, left to himself. Mankind's only hope of salvation is in the grace and mercy that God provides through Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, for a man to be saved, the sinner must acknowledge his lost and hopeless condition due to sin and cry out to God for deliverance from himself. It is only then (according to Luke 18:9-14) that a man is declared righteous.

Have your sins been forgiven, covered, and unaccounted (Romans 4:7-8)? My dear friends, this is a very important question. Have you really place your 100% confidence in Jesus Christ to save you from your sins? Has your confidence (or some of your confidence) been in your own good works, confirmation, baptism, idols, a prayer you made, or in Jesus Christ alone? I pray that you will be assured of the fact that Jesus Christ has paid for your sins in full at the cross!

UNDERSTANDING THE SMALLER MESSAGES: ROMANS 4:9-25

The simple verse, "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" is often quoted, memorized, and sung by so many throughout the world today. You find these words at church, at work, on billboards, and even at sporting events. This profound verse is very much embraced, valued, loved, and believed universally. However, this same obsession for the universal love of God for all people has not always been embraced. One such time period is the generation in which Paul lived. The Jews of his day, due to their nationalistic pride, failed to see and uphold the foundational truth of God's universal love. Israel believed that God so loved Israel, that Israel became God's only begotten son, that whosoever was circumcised and was faithful to the Law would not perish, but would be given everlasting life. However, this perspective was not true and was contradictory to the truths of the Bible. Therefore, in Romans 4:9-25 Paul is going to call Israel back to the truth of their beloved Old Testament. Paul is going to show his readers that God has made His righteousness available to the whole world, not just exclusively to the Jew or circumcised. Since this was pervasively and falsely believed by the Jewish nation, Paul uses their beloved Abraham to prove his point. Paul provides three rational proofs to his readers for why both Jews and Gentiles are recipients of God's righteousness (4:9-25).

The first proof: *The first proof that Paul uses to show his readers that God's righteousness is for both the Jews and Gentiles is the fact that God's righteousness was credited to Abraham before he was*

circumcised (4:9-12). In the mind of a Jew, circumcision equaled salvation because it provided access into the promised nation. Therefore, when Paul shows that access to God's righteousness is not through circumcision, he reveals the fact that God's gift is not to the Jews only but to the whole world. Consequently, Paul in his brilliant way is going to use the story of Abraham to trap his readers into seeing God's truth that His righteousness is available to all. He sets up his proof by first raising the question of who is the recipient of this same righteousness that King David received (4:9a). Then, Paul sets up his argument by providing the common fact that "faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness" as his answer (4:9b). Then, Paul brings up his trapping questions (4:10), "How then was it (that is, God's righteousness) credited?" and "while he was circumcised or uncircumcised?" The argument that Paul is setting up is simple. If Abraham was declared righteous before his circumcision, then his circumcision cannot be essential for righteousness to be credited.⁸² Therefore, God's righteousness would be available to both the Jews and the Gentiles. The answer Paul provides causes his readers to fall right into his trap. Paul's inevitable answer is twofold (4:10b-11a). One, he says that Abraham was credited righteousness not while he was circumcised but while he was uncircumcised. Two, Abraham received the sign of circumcision also while he was uncircumcised. Paul drives home his point by showing his readers the divine purpose behind Abraham's circumcision before salvation (4:11b-12). Paul declares that it was for two purposes. It was so that Abraham could be the father of all who believe that are not circumcised and of all who believe that are circumcised (see comment below for an explanation of the confusing wording).

The second proof: *The second proof that Paul uses to show his readers that God's righteousness is for both the Jews and Gentiles is the nature of God's promise to Abraham (4:13-17a). Paul changes topics from the timing of Abraham's circumcision to the nature of God's promise to Abraham. Paul starts his discussion by bringing up three aspects of the nature of God's promise to Abraham. The first aspect of his discussion is on the promise itself, namely, that Abraham would be an heir of the world (4:13). As Schreiner rightfully comments, "The context of Romans 4 demonstrates that the promise of inheriting the world is defined in terms of the universal fatherhood of Abraham."⁸³ What Paul meant by Abraham inheriting the world is that he would be the father of all believing people. The second aspect concerning the nature of Abraham's promise is that it was not earned through Abraham or his descendants' obedience to the Law (4:13). The third aspect concerning the nature of Abraham's promise is that it was given through faith. The second and third aspects of Abraham's promise are consistent with Paul's teaching throughout the letter thus far. After sharing the nature of the promise Paul takes his argument one step further by providing the rational proof for why Abraham's promise had to be through the righteousness of faith and not through the works of the Law (4:14-16). In 4:14, Paul explains that if Abraham had to earn the promise through the works of the Law, then it would cease to be a promise and Abraham's faith would be of no value. The reason why the promise would be of no value (See "for" in 4:15) is because the Law does not bring about promise but it brings about death. Douglas Moo comments on this verse by saying, "Paul is arguing: 'if it is the case that the inheritance is to be based on adherence to the Law, then there will be no heirs, because no fallen human being can adequately adhere to the law – and that means that faith is exercised in vain and the promise will never be fulfilled.'"⁸⁴ In contrast (See "but" in 4:15) to being an heir through adherence to the Law, Paul says that where there is no law, there is also no violation. Here Paul is suggesting another option other than the Law. That option Paul brings forth in 4:16 is faith! Paul is saying that if the inheritance is not through the Law, then there will be no concern of it being violated any longer. It is "for this reason" that Paul says that the inheritance must be*

⁸² Schreiner pg. 224

⁸³ Schreiner Pg. 227

⁸⁴ Moo Pg. 275

by faith! From Paul's rational proof, he moves to the purpose of why Abraham's promise must be through faith. Paul explains that the purpose of the promise being by faith is so that it will also be by "GRACE," resulting in the promise being guaranteed to its recipients, or in this case, to the descendants. Paul adds that this truth is not just for the Jews (those who are of the Law) but it is also for the Gentiles (those of the faith of Abraham). Paul ends his discussion regarding the purpose for the promise being by faith by commenting on how Abraham is the father of us all. By doing this Paul returns the argument back to its ultimate point that Abraham is not just the father of the Jews but also the Gentiles (all those who are of the faith of Abraham). The whole section ends by an authoritative confirmation that Abraham is the father of us all (4:17).

The third proof: The final proof that Paul uses to show his readers that God's righteousness is for both the Jews and Gentiles is the fact that it was the motivation behind Abraham's faith (4:17b-25). Paul builds his argument by showing his readers the place, person, nature, purpose, description and results of Abraham's belief. The place of Abraham's faith was in the presence of God (4:17b). The person of Abraham's faith was in the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. This is speaking of God's creative activity by which he created the world out of nothing.⁸⁵ Yet, this aspect of God is spoken of here because that is what Abraham needed in the case of Sarah's womb and also when he was asked to offer Isaac up as a sacrifice (Heb 11:19). These truths about God are probably what Abraham meditated on continuously throughout his lifetime. The nature of Abraham's faith was that he hoped against all human odds that God has provided in accordance with His word (4:18a). Douglas Moo said, regarding Abraham's faith that, "His faith was firmly based on the hope that springs from the promises of God. We note here that Abraham's faith is not described as a 'leap into dark,' a completely baseless, almost irrational 'decision' – as Christian faith is pictured by some 'existentialist' theologians – but as a 'leap' from the evidence of his senses into the security of God's word and promise."⁸⁶ From the nature of Abraham's faith, Paul moves to the purpose of Abraham's faith (4:18b). The purpose of Abraham's faith brings out the purpose of Paul's argument. The purpose is that Abraham will be the father of many nations, which is in accordance with the Old Testament promise given in Genesis 15:5, "so shall your descendants be." Paul's argument is suggesting that if the righteousness of God is not for both Jews and Gentiles, then it would go against the very promise given to Abraham. Since Abraham believed God for the purpose of being the father of many nations, and the righteousness of faith is the means by which all nation become spiritual sons of Abraham, then God's righteousness must be for all people. Paul then moves to the description of Abraham's faith (4:19-21). He describes it from two different viewpoints. First, he describes Abraham's faith from the viewpoint of his contemplated challenges (4:19). Paul makes it clear that despite Abraham's body being as good as dead and Sarah's womb being totally dead, his faith never became weak. Secondly, Paul describes Abraham's faith from the viewpoint of his contemplation on God's promises (4:20-21). Paul makes it clear that in light of God's promises Abraham's faith did not grow weary, but grew in strength and he gave God glory and remained fully confident that God was able to fulfill His Word. By this detailed description of Abraham's faith, Paul is probably trying to use it as an example for his reader to follow. Paul ends his whole argument by looking at the results of Abraham's faith (4:22-25). The results are twofold. One, Abraham's faith resulted in him being credited righteousness. Two, Abraham's faith results in those who put their faith in God, whether Jew or Gentile, being able to be credited God's glorious righteousness.

OUTLINE OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

⁸⁵ Cranfield Pg. 244

⁸⁶ Douglas Moo Pg. 282-283

IV) The Response to the good news: Paul's clarification on issues pertaining to Justification (3:27-4:25)

- B) The issue of who is credited God's righteousness: Three rational proofs for why both Jews and Gentiles are recipients of God's righteousness (4:9-25)
 - 1) The recipients of God's righteousness are both Jews and Gentiles is proven through the fact that God's righteousness was credited to Abraham before being circumcised (4:9-12)
 - (a) The question regarding the recipient of God's righteousness: is the blessing for the Jews or the Gentiles? (4:9a)
 - (b) The argument using Abraham's circumcision: Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness (4:9b)
 - (c) The argument, using Abraham's circumcision, by means of two questions (4:10a)
 - (i) How was God's righteousness credited to Abraham? (4:10a)
 - (ii) Was God's righteousness credited to him while he was circumcised or uncircumcised? (4:10a)
 - (d) The answers regarding Abraham's circumcision (4:10b-4:11a)
 - (i) Abraham received God's righteousness before he was circumcised (4:10b)
 - (ii) Abraham received the sign of circumcision before he was circumcised (4:11a)
 - 1. Paul's description of circumcision: a seal of the righteousness of faith (4:11a)
 - (e) The purpose of Abraham receiving God's righteousness before his circumcision stated: for the purpose of being the father of all who believe (4:11b)
 - (i) Paul's description of those who Abraham will father (4:11b-12)
 - 1. Abraham will father those who are not circumcised (4:11b)
 - 2. Abraham will father those who are circumcised (4:12a)
 - a. Paul's descriptions of the circumcised who are sons of Abraham (4:12b)
 - i. Those who are not only circumcised (4:12b)
 - ii. Those who also follow in the steps of Abraham's faith, which he had while uncircumcised (4:12b)
 - b. Paul's side comment regarding the result of the uncircumcised who believe: righteousness will be credited to them (4:11b)
 - 2) The recipients of God's righteousness are both Jews and Gentiles proven through the nature of God's promise to Abraham (4:13-17a)
 - (a) The nature of the promise (4:13)
 - (i) Abraham would be an heir of the world (4:13)
 - (ii) Abraham's promise was not made through the works of the Law (4:13)
 - (iii) Abraham's promise was made through the righteousness of faith (4:13)
 - (b) The rational proof for why Abraham's promise had to be through the righteousness of faith and not through the works of the Law (4:14-16)
 - (i) Paul's proof negatively stated: if the promise of being an heir is through the Law, then the need for faith is unnecessary and the promise is completely abolished (4:14)
 - 1. The reason why the promise to Abraham would be completely abolished explained: for the Law brings about God's wrath (4:15b)
 - 2. The reason why there is need for faith as the basis of the promise explained: if the Law is not the means of the promise there is no violation (4:15b)

- (ii) Paul's positive proof stated: The promise of being an heir is through faith so that it may be in accordance with grace, which will result in the promise being guaranteed to all the descendants (4:16a)
 - 1. Paul's clarification for emphasis explaining who are all these descendants (4:16b)
 - a. Not only those who are known as being of the Law (4:16b)
 - b. But also those who are of the faith of Abraham (4:16b)
 - 2. Paul's quick description of Abraham: The father of us all (4:16b)
- (c) The scriptural confirmation for why Abraham's promise had to be through the righteousness of faith and not through the works of the Law: "as it is written, a father of many nations have I made you" (4:17a)
- 3) The recipients of God's righteousness are both Jews and Gentiles proven through the fact that it was the motivation behind Abraham's faith (4:17b-25)
 - (a) The place of Abraham's belief: the presence of God (4:17b)
 - (b) The person of Abraham's belief (4:17:b)
 - (i) The God who gives life to the dead (4:17b)
 - (ii) The God who calls into being that which does not exist (4:17b)
 - (c) The nature of Abraham's belief: hope against hope Abraham believed (4:18a)
 - (d) The purpose of Abraham's belief: so that Abraham may be the father of many nations (4:18a)
 - (i) Paul affirms the purpose of Abraham's belief by affirming it with Scripture: "according to that which has been spoken, 'so shall your descendants be'"
 - (e) The description of Abraham's belief (4:19-21)
 - (i) The description of Abraham's belief despite the challenges he contemplated (4:19)
 - 1. Abraham did not become weak even though he contemplated his own body, which was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old (4:19)
 - 2. Abraham did not become weak even though he contemplated the deadness of Sarah's womb (4:19)
 - (ii) The description of Abraham's belief in light of the promises of God (4:20)
 - 1. In light of the promises of God, Abraham did not waver in unbelief (4:20)
 - 2. In light of the promises of God, Abraham grew strong in faith (4:20)
 - 3. In light of the promises of God, Abraham gave glory to God (4:20)
 - 4. In light of the promises of God, Abraham was fully assured that God was able to fulfill His word (4:21)
 - (f) The results of Abraham's belief (4:22-25)
 - (i) Abraham's belief resulted in him being credited as righteous in God's sight (4:22)
 - (ii) Abraham's belief will result in all those who believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ being credited God's righteousness (4:23-24a)
 - 1. Paul's brief description of the object of the faith of those who are credited righteousness (4:24b-25)
 - a. Those who are credited righteousness have their faith in God the Father who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (4:24)

- b. Those who credited righteousness have their faith is in God the Father who delivered over Jesus for our transgressions and raised Him up for the sake of our being declared righteous (4:25)

DIGGING INTO HEART OF PAUL'S MESSAGE:

1. To what blessing do you think verse 4:9 is referring?
2. What do you think Paul asking in verse 9?
3. Why do you think Paul asks this question in verse 9?
4. What was credited to Abraham as righteousness?
5. Why do you think that Paul asks the questions “how then was it credited?” and “While he was circumcised or uncircumcised?”
6. According to verse 10, when was Abraham credited God’s righteousness?
7. According to verse 11, when did Abraham receive the sign of circumcision?
8. What purpose does Paul give for why Abraham received circumcision after being credited righteousness by God?
9. According to verses 9-12, what is the answer to Paul’s question in verse 9?
10. What logic did Paul use to prove the answer to his question in verse 9?
11. What was Abraham promised in verse 13?
12. By what means was Abraham given that promise?
13. What function do you think the word “for” is playing in verse 14?

14. According to verse 14, what are two results if Abraham receives his promise through the Law?
15. What does verse 15 say the Law does?
16. What purpose does Paul give for why God's righteousness must be credited by faith?
17. What purpose does Paul give for the promise to Abraham being in accordance with grace?
18. Paul tells us in verse 16 that if this promise is by grace, it will be guaranteed to whom?
19. Who does Paul say is the father of us all?
20. In the beginning of verse 17, what passage does Paul quote to bring confirmation to his statement?
21. In who does verse 17 say that Abraham put His trust?
22. What two descriptions does verse 17 give for God?
23. According to verse 18, what did Abraham do when God's promise appeared utterly hopeless?
24. For what purpose did Abraham hope in God when it seen utterly hopeless?
25. What does verse 19 say about Abraham's body?
26. What does verse 19 say about Sarah's womb?
27. What does verse 19 say about Abraham's faith?

28. In light of Abraham focus on his promise from God, what 4 things does 3:20-21 say about Abraham's faith?
29. According to verse 21, in what was Abraham fully assured?
30. According to verse 22, what did God do as a result of Abraham's faith?
31. According to verse 23-24, what else resulted from Abraham's faith?
32. According to verse 24, if one is to be credited God's righteousness, in whom must they believe?
33. What does verse 24 say as to who raised Jesus Christ from the Dead?
34. What does verse 25 say as to who delivered Jesus Christ over because of our transgression?
35. What purposes does verse 25 give for why Jesus died and was raised from the dead?

MEDITATION ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

3. In what ways do these truths in this section change my way of thinking?
4. What ways should I live differently in light of this section?

COMMENTING ON PAUL'S MESSAGE:

What does Paul mean by his statement "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith"? The statement of Paul receiving "the sign of circumcision" is referring to an event that took place in Genesis 17:11, where Paul refers to circumcision as a "sign of the covenant." However, here Paul is saying that this event was also "a seal of the righteousness," which Abraham received by faith. A seal was used in Paul's day to provided confirmation or authentication of a letter being sent from a particular person. Therefore, Paul is saying that Abraham's circumcision provided confirmation or authentication of the fact that he received the gift of God's imputed (or credited) righteousness. Paul's point to his readers is that Abraham's circumcision did not provide a righteous status, but merely an outward verification of a righteousness that was already possessed.

Is verse 12 speaking about one or two different groups of people? Despite the confusion of Paul's wording, the context and grammar strongly suggests that Paul is referring to just one group, the Jewish Christians. The sentence should be understood as Paul saying that, "Abraham is the father of the Jewish Christians who are not only circumcised but also walk in the steps of our father Abraham, who believed while he was still in an uncircumcised state."⁸⁷

In what way is someone credited righteousness? The idea of being credited righteousness suggests that a person acquires a status of righteousness that does not belong to him, but belongs to someone else. For example, if a person gets money credited to him, that means that a person who has money applies that money to the account of another. The person possesses and credits the righteousness is God Himself. The person being credited the righteousness is the one who places their place in God.

What does Paul mean when he says that Abraham is an heir of the world? The promise given to Abraham in verse 13 is the promise that he would be an heir of the world. This promise is what is known today as the Abrahamic Covenant found in Genesis 12, 13, 15 and 17. The Covenant carries with it three promises. The first promise is that of a multitude of descendants from many nations (Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:4-6, 16-20; 22:17). The second promise is that Abraham would be given a special piece of land (Genesis 13:15-17; 15:12-21; 17:8). The last promise is that Abraham's descendants will be a channel of blessing to the world (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18).⁸⁸ Paul's statement that Abraham will be an "heir of the world" picks up on the promise that Abraham will have a multitude of descendants from many nations. Biblical history has revealed that the universal fatherhood of Abraham would be a spiritual fatherhood and not a physical one and would come to reality through the provision of the righteousness of Christ by faith.

⁸⁷ Moo Pg. 270

⁸⁸ Moo Pg. 274