

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans
With a Greek English Dictionary
For the terms of the Epistle

By

Professor Dr. Maurice Tawadros
Professor of the New Testament

At the Coptic Seminary & the Institute of Coptic Studies, Cairo

Author's Preface

Acknowledgment

In acknowledgment of the invaluable support of my dear sons Mr. John Tawadros and Mr. Mark Tawadros for helping bringing this book to light, I must express my deep gratitude to both of them.

I also assure the English reader that the translation through the devoted effort of the translator Dr. Wedad A. Tawfik is done in a manner which will give an accurate presentation of the meaning.

I pray that the whole work be for the glory of God's name and the benefit of the reader.

The author

Maurice Tawadros

Introduction On the Epistle

The Biography of Paul the Apostle

Before starting to speak about the Epistle to the Romans, we shall introduce a brief historical account on the life of Paul the apostle before and after his embracing the faith.

The life of Paul the apostle before his embracing the faith:

We can give an idea about the beginnings and the life of Paul the apostle before his accepting the faith from the sayings of the apostle himself as stated on his mouth in his Epistles, and from what St. Luke mentioned in the Book of the Acts:

"But Paul said, 'I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city.'" (Acts 21: 39) "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to the Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished." (Acts 22: 3-5)

The apostle also said, "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did." (2Tim 1: 3) "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee." (Acts 23: 6) "... circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning

the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (Phil 3: 5, 6)

In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle said, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I." (2Cor 11: 22) And in his Epistle to the Galatians, he said, "And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." (Gal 1: 14) He also says, "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." (Acts 26: 4, 5) "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it." (Gal 1: 13)

Paul the apostle likewise points out to his being a Roman citizen enjoying the rights of such citizenship. Therefore when they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and un-condemned?" When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, 'Yes.' The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him (Acts 22: 25-29)

The apostle's name was first "Saul", a Hebrew name meaning "asked, or required". Then he was given the name "Paul", which means "the small", by which name he was known among the gentiles. A Jew often had more than one name, as Joseph who was called "Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus" (Acts 1: 23); and John had the surname "Mark" (Acts 12: 12); and Jesus was called "Justus" (Col 4: 11).

Paul's life in faith:

Although Paul the Apostle had persecuted Christianity violently, it pleased God, who separated him from his mother's womb, to call him through His grace, to reveal His Son in him, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles (Gal 1: 15). The Lord appeared to him while on his way to Damascus. "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?' Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.' And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank." (Acts 9: 1-9) The Book of Acts mentions that the Lord appeared to a disciple in Damascus named Ananias and commanded

him in a vision to go to the street called "Straight" and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. Saul was praying and he saw a vision that a man named Ananias was coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Ananias at the beginning was afraid of Saul, but the Lord assured him that Saul is a chosen vessel of the Lord to bear His name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. So Ananias did as the Lord commanded him and Paul received his sight and was baptized.

Paul the apostle told the story of his embracing the Christian Faith three times in the Book of Acts (9; 22; 26)

Paul embraced Christianity in the twenty first year of the reign of Tibarios¹ in the year 35 AD. Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Galatians that he afterwards went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus (Gal 1: 17). Paul stayed in Arabia for three years, and when he returned to Damascus he preached Christ in the Synagogues that He is the Son of God. All who heard were amazed and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 9: 2-22).

The Book of Acts then speaks about the escape of Paul the apostle from Damascus to Jerusalem, then to Tarsus: "Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples

¹ In the year 37 AD Tibarius the King of Rome died and Kligola succeeded him, and in the year 40 AD Kligola died and Claudius reigned. Judea and Samaria were given to Herod Argippa I (see Acts 12), who died in the year 44 AD.

took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus." (Acts 9: 23-30) Then Paul the apostle in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians refers to his escape from Damascus and mentions the era in which this happened, saying, "In Damascus the governor, under Aretas te King, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands." (2Cor 11: 32, 33)

In the entry of Paul the apostle Jerusalem (it was his first visit to this city) he got acquainted with St. Peter and remained with him fifteen days. There he also met with James the apostle, the Lord's brother (Gal 1: 18). He could not stay more in Jerusalem because the Jews were chasing him. Furthermore, the Lord appeared to him in a vision and said to him, "Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me." And the apostle answered the Lord, saying, "Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him." But the Lord said to Paul,

"Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles." (Acts 22: 17-21)

Afterwards Paul the apostle came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia preaching the faith which he previously had destroyed (Gal 1: 21), then returned to Tarsus his homeland (Acts 9: 30).

We can say that the period in which Paul the apostle preached faith in Syria and Cilicia before going to Antioch took about six years.

As Christianity spread in Antioch by those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen, among whom were men from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11: 20), the Church in Jerusalem sent out Barnabas to the Church of Antioch to establish the believers steadfast in the Lord. In the year 44 AD Barnabas departed to Tarsus seeking Saul, and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. There they assembled with the church for a whole year and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. In these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout the whole world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar, who reigned after the death of Kligola. Then Judea and Samaria were given to Herod Agrippa I.

In the year 45 AD Paul the apostle and Barnabas were sent out from Antioch to Jerusalem to bring relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea (Acts 11: 29) (This was his second visit to Jerusalem)

Then the Book of Acts speaks about the missionary voyages of Paul the apostle for preaching:

The First Missionary Voyage:

The First Missionary Voyage of Paul the apostle started in the year 48 AD and took two years (Acts 14). This Voyage was by a calling from the Holy Spirit who said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So the disciples in the church, having fasted and prayed, laid hands on them and sent them away (Acts 13: 2, 3).

Paul and Barnabas started their voyages from Antioch of Syria then they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. They went through the island to Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia, but John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas came to Antioch in Pisidia then to Iconium, then they fled to Lystra and Derbe, the cities of Lycaonia. When they returned through Lystra and Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia and went down to Attalia, from where they sailed to Antioch where they had been sent.

Paul and Barnabas attended the Church Council in Jerusalem (this is the third visit of the apostle to Jerusalem). Contemporary events happened during the First Voyage of Paul the apostle, like the enthronement of Agrippa II as king in the year 48 AD. The Capital of his kingdom was Khalkis affiliated to Damascus.

The Second Voyage: (Acts 15: 39- 18: 22)

Paul the apostle started his second voyage in the year 51 AD, which took up to the year 54 AD. This period witnessed many events: Claudius banished the Jews from Rome (Acts 18: 2), Felix was set over Judea in the year 53 AD, and Claudius died and Nero succeeded him in the year 54 AD.

Barnabas parted from Paul because of John called Mark, and Paul chose Silas and went to visit the brethren in every city where they had preached. So they went through Syria and Cilicia, then came to Derbe and Lystra. When they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. And after they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So they passed by Mysia and came down to Troas. There a vision appeared to Paul; a man of Macedonia pleading with him to go over to Macedonia and help them. They sailed from Troas to Samothrace, then to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a foremost city of that part of Macedonia. After they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica. Then the brethren sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. Again the brethren sent Paul away to go to the sea, but both Silas and Timothy remained there. Paul arrived to Athens, and afterwards departed from Athens and went to Corinth, where he stayed for six months. In Corinth he wrote his First Epistle to the Thessalonians in the year A. D. 52; and his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians in the year A. D. 53. Then he passed through Cenchrea and went to Ephesus, and from Ephesus to Caesarea then to Jerusalem (this is his fourth visit to Jerusalem), and from there he went down to Antioch in Syria.

The Third Voyage: (Acts 18: 23- 25: 11)

This voyage continued until the year A. D. 59. After he had departed from Antioch he went over all the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples, then he went Ephesus in the year A. D. 55. From Ephesus he wrote his First Epistle to Corinth in the year A. D. 57. Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after passing through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, while he himself stayed in Asia for a time. After the uproar caused by Demetrius the silversmith, Paul departed to Macedonia from where he wrote his Second Epistle to Corinth in the year A. D. 57. Then he went to Halas (Greece) and arrived at Corinth in the year A. D. 58, and there he wrote his Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans, and stayed there three months. When he was to sail to Syria, the Jews plotted against him, so he decided to return through Macedonia. Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia, also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychius and Trophimus of Asia. Those men went ahead and waited at Troas, while Paul sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where they stayed seven days. Paul then headed to Assos, and went to Mitylene, from where they sailed and the next day they came opposite Chaios. The following day they arrived at Samos and stayed at Togyllium, and the next day to Miletus. Paul had actually decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. Afterwards he departed and set sail straight to Cos, then to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. There he found a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, passed Cyprus and sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre for there the ship was to unload her cargo. He stayed there seven days and went to Ptolemais and stayed one day, then to Caesarea and to Jerusalem

(this is the fifth visit to this city). In the Temple the Jews from Asia saw him and stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him and dragged him out of the temple. When the news came to the commander of the garrison in Jerusalem, he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. So when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander then commanded that Paul be bound with two chains, and he asked who he was and what he had done. Paul suffered much due to the tumult of the multitude against him. The commander sent him to Caesarea in the year A. D. 58, where he was imprisoned for two years. He was tried before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa II, but Paul appealed to Caesar, so his request was responded.

The Last Voyage: (Acts 27, 28)

It was decided that Paul goes to Rome to be tried before Caesar, so he was put on board of a ship of Adramyttium sailing along the coasts of Asia and they landed at Sidon, then sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. Passing over the sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, they came to Myra, a city of Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, so he put them on board. They were two hundred and seventy six, and they arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not permit them to proceed, they sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. Passing it with difficulty, they came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there. When the wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon, which carried the ship and ran under the

shelter of an island called Clauda. They lightened the ship and threw the ship's tackle into the sea. They did not recognize the land, but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. But the ship ran aground and the prow stuck fast sand remained immovable, while the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners lest any of them should swim away and escape, but the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose. When they had escaped, they found out that the island was called Malta. Three months later, they sailed in an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and landing at Syracuse they stayed three days. From there they headed to Rhegium, then to Puteoli, and then toward Rome. In Rome Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Paul arrived to Rome in the year A. D. 61, and from his prison in Rome he wrote his Epistles to Philemon, Colossi, Ephesus, and Philippi, known as "The Prison Epistles". After being set free he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews.

The texts of the Prison Epistles demonstrate that Paul the apostle after his imprisonment in Rome continued his work and his voyages, for in the Epistle to the Philippians the apostle says, "And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith ... I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly." (Phil 1: 25; 2: 24) Compare this with the text in the Second Epistle to Timothy, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I had fought the good

fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day." (2Tim 4: 6- 8) Furthermore Eusebius in his book "The Church History" speaks about Paul the apostle, saying, [It is said that after the apostle had presented his defense, he was sent again to minister for evangelism, but on his return to the same city he was martyred. In this imprisonment he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy in which he mentioned his first defense and his being about to die] (Eusebius, Church History, 2: 22) And Muratorian Canon refers to his visit to Spain, which proves that this visit could not have been made before the first imprisonment of Paul the Apostle in Rome.

As for the voyages of Paul the Apostle after his being set free from prison in Rome, he went to Macedonia (Phil 1: 26; 2: 24), to Asia Minor (Philem 22), and to Spain (Rom 15: 24). Maybe after his return he went to Ephesus, where he held a dialogue with Hymenaeus and Alexander (1Tim 1: 20). We also deduce from the Epistle to Titus that Paul the apostle went to Nicopolis as well (Tit 3: 12).

In the year A. D. 67, Paul the apostle wrote his First Epistle to Timothy from Macedonia (1Tim 1: 3), and in the same year he wrote his Epistle to Titus from Ephesus. In the year A. D. 68, he was cast in prison in Rome, where he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy, his last Epistle.

Therefore, we can say the Paul the apostle wrote his fourteen Epistles as follows:

1. His First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which he wrote from Corinth in the year A. D. 52.
2. His Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which he wrote from Corinth in the year A. D. 53.

3. His First Epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote from Ephesus in the year A. D. 57.
4. His Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote from Macedonia in the year A. D. 57.
5. His Epistle to The Galatians, which he wrote from Corinth in the year A. D. 58.
6. His Epistle to The Romans, which he wrote from Corinth in the year A. D. 58.
7. His Epistle to The Ephesians, which he wrote from Rome in the year A. D. 62.
8. His Epistle to The Colossians, which he wrote from Rome in the year A. D. 62.
9. His Epistle to Philemon, which he wrote from Rome in the year A. D. 63.
10. His Epistle to the Philippians, which he wrote from Rome in the year A. D. 63.
11. His Epistle to The Hebrews, which he wrote from Italy in the year A. D. 63.
12. His First Epistle to Timothy, which he wrote from Macedonia in the year A. D. 67.
13. His Epistle to Titus, which he wrote from Ephesus in the year A. D. 67.
14. His Second Epistle to Timothy, which he wrote from Rome in the year A. D. 68.

The Epistle which Paul the apostle wrote from his first imprisonment in Rome are called "The Prison Epistles", namely:

1. Ephesus
2. Colossi

3. Philemon

4. Philippi

Whereas the Epistles which were concerned more with pastoral care were called "The Pastoral Epistles", namely: First and Second Timothy, and Titus.

Concerning the Faithful to whom the Epistles were addressed: Some Epistles were addressed to churches, like: the Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians (2 Epistles), to the Galatians, to Ephesus, to Philippi, to Colossi, to the Thessalonians (2 Epistles), and to the Hebrews. Some other Epistles were addressed to individuals (with a general objective of course), like the Epistles to Timothy (2 Epistles), to Titus, and to Philemon.

Chronologically, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians is considered the first epistle written by Paul the apostle, while the Second Epistle to Timothy is the last.

The Epistles of the New Testament form almost one third of its Books, however using the epistles for teaching was not something new in the apostolic era although a few exist in the Old Testament. We read in the Old Testament only on some epistles written by kings and prophets (see 1kgs 21: 8, 9; 2kgs 5: 5-7, 19: 1, 20: 12 – Jer 29: 1). The epistles in general have been used since old times as models through which one's feelings may be expressed. As for the New Testament Paul the apostle is considered the first person who used this type of writing to reveal the divine reality. With the exception of the four Gospels the epistles of Paul the apostle form the biggest part of the Books of the New Testament.

But we have to distinguish between the letter and the epistle, and let us ask that which Paul the Apostle wrote is it letters or epistles? Though it may seem a strange question, the answer is useful to the commentators and theologians.

A letter is like a speech between two persons standing aloof, by which the writer informs the addressee what would have been said in case the writer is present. For if there is no distance between the writer and the addressee, there will be no need for writing a letter, and a visit or direct speech would be sufficient instead. What distinguishes an epistle from a letter is not the length of the epistle, for a letter likewise may be long. Nor the subject can be the difference, for a letter also may contain some serious contents of great importance. The style or method of writing also is not the difference between the letter and the epistle, for both may be written in the same style and method. But what distinguishes the epistle from the letter is the generality and objectivity that characterizes the epistle, whereas the letter is characterized by being personal. That is why we describe the writings of Paul the apostle as epistles not mere personal letters dealing with personal matters. Even the Epistle to Philemon, which seem to be personal because the apostle speaks in it as a friend or a father rather than an apostle, yet in the opening of the epistle we can see that the apostle Paul did not address the epistle to Philemon alone and Apphia and Archippus who were perhaps of the same household, but he also addressed it to the whole church community with the words, "and to the church in your house" (Philem 2).

Therefore the Epistle to Philemon is not a private epistle, but rather a public general one, especially that the apostle moves from the private talk to the public speech, for he says, "But, meanwhile, also prepare a

guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you." (Philem 22) Such generality distinguish the writings of Paul the apostle, for he says in his Second Epistle to Timothy, for instance, (which may be thought a private letter), "Grace be with you." (2Tim 4: 22, see also Tit 3: 15)

We can therefore say that the Epistles of Paul the apostle have been written to the church in general in every age and in all places, although some of them have been addressed to certain churches, like that to the Romans or the two epistles to the Corinthians.

Like all the Books of the New Testament, and all of the Old Testament, the Epistles of Paul the apostle have been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for Paul the apostle says, "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches." (1Cor 2: 10- 13) "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." (1Cor 14: 37) "..., since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me." (2Cor 13: 3) "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." (1Thess 2: 13)

Peter the apostle likewise says about the prophets of the Old Testament, "To them it was revealed ... they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven." (1Pet 1: 12) "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2Pet 1: 21)

The inspiration in the Holy Scripture does not set aside the personality of the writer, nor turns into a mere process of dictating, restricting the writer with the word and style. The inspiration does not rob the writer his personality, culture, style or wording, but it overwhelms him, directing, guiding, and protecting against falling in error, i.e. giving the writer infallibility. So what the writer writes will be an expression of God's will and the will and guidance of the Holy Spirit, without setting aside the character of the writer. This reveals the difference of style and wording of the writings of both the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Scripture. It also explains the reason for instance of the difference of the style of the gospels and the epistles of the New Testament, and the difference of style within the epistles. It is because each writer had his own style.

The inspiration does not care about the oneness of the wording or style through the whole Scripture, but cares rather that the writers convey through their writings what the Holy Spirit wills. So their writings come as expression of the will of the Holy Spirit. We already know that the gospels account about the life of the Lord Christ and His sayings and teachings is a translation, because the Lord Christ spoke in Aramaic, whereas the gospels were written in Greek. Even the Gospel of Matthew which had been written originally in Hebrew was shortly afterwards

written in Greek, which was spreading at that time. the divine wisdom so willed that the gospel be written in this language so that it might reach to the farthest ends of the world, for had it been written in Hebrew, its benefit would have been confined to the Jews alone. The Jewish people were at that time, according to the prophecies of the Lord Christ, exposed to dispersion in the year A. D. 70 on the hands of the Romans. Therefore, in the light of this understanding of the inspiration, we can find explanation why St. Luke was influenced in his writings by his profession as physician, and why St. Paul was influenced in his writings by his past education before embracing faith.

However, the work of the Holy Spirit is of great importance for the writer, for it is positive action, moving and urging the writer to write, preparing for him the surrounding to realize this goal, assisting him to choose the wording suitable for the purpose, and moreover, providing the writer with the knowledge and information not permitting him to fall in an error.

Hence, what the apostle have written are not considered human efforts or an expression of a human will, but rather holy writings inspired by the Holy Spirit and drawn up by a divine revelation. As Paul the apostle says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2Tim 3: 16)¹

The Author

¹ Refer to my book, "Dogmatic Theology", Part I, Ch. 5, Youths Bishopric Bookshop, 1994

Paul the Apostle and His Educational Background

Paul the apostle is a writer who is not easily understood even by the saint and the ministers of God's Sacraments, how much rather by the public. Even those who were enlightened like him with the heavenly light admitted that his epistles contained "some things hard to understand" (2 Pet 3: 16). St. Polycarp likewise admitted expressly, saying, [Neither I nor anybody else can pursue the blessed and dignified Paul. This great apostle who possessed the lantern of love and faith in Christ could penetrate the heavens and receive the revelation of God's mysteries. Who among all people has such strong wings that may enable him to pursue the apostle in flying as high as God's throne?!]

Such difficulty which we face when trying to understand the teachings and writings of Paul the apostle may be represented in the problems of "Predestination" and "Man's Freedom", which two problems resemble the Stoics problem of "Fate".

The views of the Stoics had spread everywhere in the time of St. Paul, especially in Tarsus the homeland of the apostle. To those old moral philosophers we owe some beautiful moral words like: conscience, suitable or fit. Actually characters like Cleanthes, Posidonius, Epictetus and others are more of religious characters than philosophers. Therefore it is not strange to put those side by side with Paul and discuss the extent of his relationship with them and their influence on him.

As for the religious air of the Stoic Philosophy, Zenon is an example nearer to the type of an eastern prophet than to the type of a Greek philosopher. A Greek philosopher has attained its climax in

Socrates and Plato: in their talks, speeches and lessons they call expressly to a kind of referring to the intellect and experience. This method is contrary to the method of a prophet who believes that he has discovered the truth through meditation and inspiration rather than through intellectual evidence. A prophet declares the results of his call by his authority as messenger from God, without giving reasons. It is strange that although the content of Zenon's teaching is Greek, the tone of his voice is nearer to that of prophets. He felt that he was entrusted with a mission, which he wanted to perform and to encourage people to apply it fully. ¹

Undoubtedly Paul the apostle shares with the Stoic philosophers most of their characteristics and resembles them to a far extent in views and language. It is because those, being religious messengers rather than philosophers, have introduced fervently their views and tried to bring calmness and assurance to the excited people of the Graeco Roman society.

Anyway all the philosophical schools of that epoch were characterized by the practical religious character. They avoided search into theoretical issues, for the purpose of theoretical thinking mainly is to serve practical matters. In fact late Greek philosophers focused on renewing and refreshing the falling heathen world more than on presenting philosophical researches to satisfy the scholastic desires of their followers. The Stoics had a great influence in this respect, and their intellectual influence extended far and wide and won for them followers from among the public. Such philosophical views invaded the culture spreading at those times to the extent that the views of schools like the

¹ Dr. Ossman Amin: Stoic Philosophy, first edition, p. 4

neo Calibans, Stoics, Epicureans, and Pythagoreans spread all over the social levels and became in the possession of many, and were not confined to the philosophers. We will not be exaggerating if we say, as Edward Caird says, the Stoics and Epicureans took over the work which the clergy of Christianity were had been performing.¹ Those philosophers were preachers, preaching complete salvation for people from the troubles of life, the same as the apostles of Christianity were doing. The Calibean philosopher "Kratsi" was called by his contemporaries "Door Opener" because he used to enter houses to teach and save those within without distinction.² The Stoic Philosophy in particular spread more than all other philosophies. From the days of Posidonius (B. C. 48) and onward, in the Roman Epoch, the Stoic Philosophy took the religious Sufism and appeared like a religion as well as a philosophical ideology. After the fall of the old religions, the Stoics tried to replace them and to contribute to restore morals and promote the society. They adopted the principles of the old stern moral scholars, which gained for them appreciation. They walked an ideal life that conformed to the stern moral principles. Their life and their views attracted many, strengthening the troubled souls that were seeking salvation and peace in life.

The Stoic prophets were urged by missionary zeal, so they moved from one place to another teaching their doctrines on the Logos, the Fate, the Divine Dispensation, and the divine origin of man and equality among all. With these beliefs or teachings they urged the people to live according to the intellect or "naturally". The Stoic doctrines spread in the Graeco Roman society to the extent that it was difficult to find somebody with no knowledge of the Stoic moral views. This we can say the more about Paul

¹ CAIRD (E), THE EVOLUTION OF THEOLOGY IN GREEK PHILSOPHERS, 1904. VOL. 11., P49

² DIOGENE LAERCE, VI, 86

the apostle, because his private relationship with the Stoic philosophers facilitated this for him, for he was born in Tarsus, a university city at that time where the Stoic philosophy was flourishing. It was more flourishing with philosophy than Alexandria and Athens. The students in Tarsus were of the citizens, because it was difficult for foreigners to travel there, unlike Alexandria where most of the students were from abroad, and the few only citizens. Rome was full of Tarsus teachers, and Diogenes Layros (VII, 35) mentions eight of the Stoic philosophers who came down from Tarsus. This is to say that Paul the apostle lived in a city where the stoic philosophy had flourished. So, although he used to say that he was "more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." (Gal 1: 14), he certainly had some knowledge of the thoughts and language of the stoics. A man like Paul the apostle having such mental power and intelligence could not have cared about the civilization around him, and no doubt his teachers in Tarsus had knowledge of stoicism. The language of his family, his school and his Holy Bible had been the Greek language. He might have learnt Aramaic afterwards in Jerusalem (Acts 12: 4; 22: 2). But seeing that he had left Tarsus to Jerusalem to be taught at the feet of Gamaliel the Law Teacher (Acts 22: 3), and was known for his love of freedom and his friendship with those brought up in Greek culture, to the extent that the Talmud tells us that five thousand of his ten thousand disciples were learnt in Greek philosophy, therefore there is not the least doubt that Paul the apostle knew the Greek philosophy, especially the Stoic, as also evident from many of his Epistles.

The problem of the relationship of Paul the apostle with the Stoic philosophy led to a more general problem, that of the relationship between Christianity and Greek philosophy, which problem many have searched into and differed in opinion concerning it. Some would go far in

understanding this relationship as to say that the Stoic philosophy is the origin of Christianity. Yet we cannot but admit the essential difference between Christianity and Stoic philosophy on the main principles. From among the early fathers was Jerome who referred to a noticeable agreement between Stoicism and Christian Doctrines. Before Jerome Justin the martyred philosopher accepted the same opinion, and many of the church authors found in Stoicism and in the philosophy in general a preparatory evangelism of the gospel. Dr. Ossman Amin, in his aforementioned book "The Stoic Philosophy" has spoken in detail about the relationship between Stoicism and Christianity. In this respect he said:

[It has not occurred to the mind of anybody of those who wrote about Stoicism to argue about the many and deep differences between both. Stoicism holds the belief in Pantheism, necessity and enforceability, the annihilation of souls after death, permissibility of suicide, whereas has completely different views concerning the same matters.] However, the same author says: [It is well known for the Theological Researchers of Christianity that the Epistles of Paul the apostle are in language and content most similar to the epistles of Seneca and treatises of Epictetus. The reason is the well known fact that Paul the apostle was brought up in Tarsus in an environment where Stoic views had been familiar ... Paul the apostle for example is of the opinion that the Stoics do not care about the outer circumstances surrounding man, for he sees that such circumstances have nothing to do with man's salvation and soundness of the soul (Gal 3: 23). The Lord Christ said something similar in this respect, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mt 10: 28) Epictetus in fact was esteeming high his moral mission, and called himself a soldier, as Paul the apostle called himself "Soldier of Christ". Moreover, both Epictetus and Paul sought trust in God as the source of

their power, which resulted in providing them with faith and calmness in all circumstances of life. A person who commits sin is a miserable and poor slave, "Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (Jn 8: 34), no matter what good works they do. All such words remind us of the Stoic doctrine on perfect indivisible virtue.

If we think how Paul the apostle used the word "body" we will find it is purely stoic. The same applies to his analysis of the bodies and their kinds: earthly, animal, and heavenly. We can say the same about Paul's analysis of the human nature. We can see that he built his doctrine on a stoic basis, for he see man as an essential unit composed of three elements: the spirit, the animal life and the body. The soul is common between man and animal, while the spirit is common between God and man. With this theory God and man become partners in a worldly aspect, excluding animal, plants and inanimate beings. The element of this partnership is the spiritual nature. This is the same which the Stoics say.

Furthermore Paul agrees clearly with stoicism in his view concerning the practices of religion, for he is of the opinion of establishing what he calls, "reasonable service" (Rom 12: 1). The Epistles of Paul, like the treatises of Epictetus, are rich in chanting God's praises. Like Epictetus, he says that we should give thanks to God to have favor with Him, and glorify Him through leading a pure and blameless life (1Cor 14: 15).

Much argument have arisen among those searching into the Christian doctrines concerning the issue of the "Word" and the "Holy Spirit" and their origin. However some researchers found that the use of both terms was not new but had been familiar in the Stoic School in the early

Christian epoch. Yet it is impossible to say definitely that these terms are genuine stoic, but we can only say that the Christian Doctrine that God is One and several at the same time is a doctrine that has a close relationship with the Stoic philosophy. It is true that the Doctrine of the "Holy Trinity" owes its origin to Paul the apostle, but we notice that these origins are presented in the early writings of Seneca, for he says: "Two things accompany us wherever we go: our portion of the sky with the stars above us and the earth below us, and our portion of the moral inclinations within us, which we owe to the great power which created the universe. This power we sometimes call "The Dominating God" and sometimes "The Incorporeal Wisdom" that creates the high works, and other times we call it "the Divine Spirit" who penetrates the things whether great or disdainful.]

Dr. Amin Ossman concluded his discussion saying that if there is any aspect of similarity between the Wise Stoic and the Christian Saint, yet there is a deep difference between the Stoic ideal and the Christian ideal. The Stoics are of the opinion that virtue is learned by reasoning, and it is following the human instinct, which is actually divine and good. Virtue to them is satisfied with itself and in need for anything else. A Christian on the other hand considers virtue a matter of faith and emotion rather than of reason. It is the fight against one's nature which is corrupt and a work of Satan. Moreover, virtue is not satisfied with itself, but is rather helpless unless assisted by God who extends His assistance to whom He may want. A Stoic Wise does not seek anything beyond this world and this earthly life, whereas a Christian Saint aspires to a more sublime goal, that is, the other world, Heaven.¹

¹ Dr. Ossman Amin, *The Stoic Philosophy*, p. 286-293

There will be further discussion of such topics in our theological studies of the New Testament.

Dr. Youssef Karam, likewise, in his book "History of the Greek Philosophy", refers to the relationship between Stoicism and Christian Doctrines. He says:

[The four great philosophical schools: Platonic, Stoic, Aristotle, and Epicurean were arranged according to their acceptability to the Christian thinkers of that epoch. However they did not accept the Stoic view of pantheism, complete materialism, necessity, annihilation by death, permissibility of suicide. They criticized the Stoic contradiction in piety for they do not admit that there are difference and independence of personality. Nevertheless this school was from its inception a school of virtue, fathers, and piety. Its leaders held to such stands and went far in it, calling fervently to the worship and love of God. They called Him "Father", and analyzed accurately spiritual life. They even described in detail the various kinds of virtues in the different circumstances, exceeding by far the Greek philosophy. Stoicism prevailed in Rome in the epoch of early Christianity, for the virtuous took pride in their disdain of the events of time and holding to goodwill and submission to fate rules, at the time when the emperors were excessively despotic Christian thinkers quoted from stoicism, especially in the field of morals, for the majority had been Stoics or Stoic Platonists before getting baptized. Those considered these two schools due to their spiritual disposition an introduction to Christianity.]¹

¹ Youssef Karam, History of the Greek Philosophy, 1985, p. 254-255

Gilson, in his book "The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy" on the idea of the Christian Philosophy, said about the relationship between Paul the apostle and philosophy:

[We have to turn back beyond the early philosophers of Christianity, for the earliest witness was not a philosopher. However, his views dominated over the succeeding development of all Christian views. By this of course we refer to St. Paul, for we can say that it is he who established the rules on which the whole Christian thought has been based. The Christian thinkers who succeeded him did nothing except deducing the results based on these rules. Christianity to St. Paul was not mere philosophy, but a religion, for he was determined not to know anything or preach anything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Savior, and Redeemer of sinners through His grace. Therefore any talk about a philosophy of St. Paul will be meaningless. If there are some pieces from the Greek philosophy implied in his writings, these may be either included incidentally or have in most cases become perfect elements of a religious content transforming its significance completely. The Christianity of St. Paul is not a philosophy added to other philosophies. No, nor is it a philosophy that must replace the other philosophies. It is rather a religion that invalidates whatever is usually called "philosophy" and spares us the trouble of searching for a certain philosophy. This is because Christianity is the way of salvation, therefore it is something different from knowledge, and is higher than to be a planning for it. We can expressly say that you can find no Christian person aware of this fact more than St. Paul.]

Gilson further says: [As Paul the apostle says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians that the new inspiration has brought in a stumbling block, or stand as an obstacle between Judaism and Hellenism. The Jews seek

salvation through literal compliance with the law (the divine law) and through obedience to the commandments of God whose power revealed in His miracles testify to His glory ... whereas the Greek search for salvation which can be realized by good intent and trust provided by the natural light to the mind. What then did Christianity bring to these and those? Christianity brought the idea of salvation through faith in the crucified Christ, by this is meant that it brought to the Jews a stumbling block, for those were seeking a sign of power in God introduced to them in such a weak and humble form, which was something shameful to them. Christianity likewise was foolishness to the Greeks who sought after evident and reasonable facts, for it introduced to them the unreasonable idea "The Idea of God" that Man who died on the cross and rose again from the dead to save us. Nothing then in Christianity may be an instrument by which it can contradict the wisdom of the world except the mystery of Christ that is beyond any worldly wisdom (1Cor 1: 19-25).]

Gilson goes on to say that St. Paul with the same wording by which he reveals the inability of the Greek philosophy (1Corr 1: 19-25) he suggests another wisdom, that is, the Person of Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, what he really meant was for us to set aside the outward wisdom of the Greeks which actually is foolishness and go through the way to the outward foolishness of Christ which actually is wisdom. Hence, instead of saying that St. Paul holds that the gospel is salvation not wisdom, we should rather say that the salvation which he preaches is in his view the real wisdom and true wisdom because it is salvation.¹

¹ Gilson, Etienne, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (presented and analyzed by Dr. Imam Abdel Fattah Imam), Said Rafat Bookshop, p. 43-46

Generally speaking, we can say the Paul the apostle had no detailed and comprehensive knowledge of Greek philosophy. All his knowledge about it was not derived directly from the Stoic philosophy and the Greek philosophers, but from study of the writings of the Greek Jews of that epoch. Therefore the influence of the Greek philosophy on Paul the apostle was not serious and did not the main principles of his beliefs and doctrines. Although he has employed in formulating them with the stoic style known at that time, but he did not derive from the Greek philosophy. His beliefs and doctrines were actually an extension of the inspiration of the Old Testament which had been revealed to him directly through a revelation from the Lord Jesus (Gal 1: 11, 12). The apostle did not accept to be, he or other Christians, deriving their thoughts and views from the teaching of philosophers or other human teachers, for he says, "... not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God ..." (2Cor 3: 5). The apostle made it clear that he preached to the world what was more sublime and stronger than the worldly wisdom, for he preached Christ Jesus who for the faithful is the power of God and wisdom of God (1Cor 1: 24). Undoubtedly, the apostle in his preaching the gospel used some terms and stoic views that were familiar to the thinkers of his age, however, he enjoyed such creative power and prophetic zeal that enabled him to give the words and terms life and meaning suitable for formulating the divine facts. In most cases he did not use the stoic terms with their original meaning used by the stoic philosopher. Moreover in his new life in Christ he praised the spirit of freedom which a true Christians enjoys. Furthermore in using the stoic terms and views he did not show any confusion or hesitation, for it was more suitable to formulate the new Christian facts in the style familiar to the human mind of his age so that they might be easier and more fruitful. Although in his First Epistle to the

Corinthians and his Epistle to the Colossians he seems as if disdaining such worldly philosophies, it does not mean that the apostle lacked this knowledge or was ignorant of such beautiful doctrines of the Greek philosophy: the apostle here was addressing his speech to those who boasted of the Greek philosophy and its power, because knowledge puffs up (1Cor 8: 1). The apostle explained that it is impossible that the human philosophy protects man from falling in idolatry and corruption.

To brief all the above we say that the apostle had some knowledge of stoic philosophy indirectly through reading some writings of the Greek Jews. So it was necessary that we search the extent of the existing relationship between the teachings of Paul the apostle and the stoic philosophy, a problem which preoccupied with the same degree both the commentators of the stoic philosophy and the commentators of the teachings of Paul the apostle.

We can further say in short that Paul the apostle in spite of employing sometimes the terms of the Greek philosophy, he gave them a new purport different from that used in the Greek philosophy. If we find some terms in the Epistles of Paul the apostle which have been used in the Greek philosophy, it does not mean that the apostle has borrowed his views from the Greek philosophers, because the apostle introduced his teachings by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the teachings of the New Testament which are actually an extension and complementing the teachings of the Old Testament. We have then to search into the interpretation of the teaching of the apostle Paul in what is written by the inspiration in the Old Testament Books rather than in the writings of the Greek philosophers. It is likewise wrong to search for the direct influence of the Greek philosophy in the writings of Paul the

apostle and try to interpret his teachings about the Word or the Holy Spirit or the body in the light of the teachings of the Greek philosophers.

Such an attempt causes a deep deviation in understanding the teachings of the apostle Paul and in understanding Christianity in general.

Christianity does not derive its teachings from any human doctrine however sublime that might be, but directly from God, from His revelation to us in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

=====+=====

The Church of Rome and its foundation

Faith did not move to Rome directly by one of the apostles of the Lord Christ. The spirit of the Epistle to the Romans and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, assert with no doubt that none of the apostles of the Lord Christ has gone to Rome and preach there when Rome embraced faith and spread in it. In the Epistle to the Romans the apostle mentions that he had been sent by the Lord Christ to preach the Gentiles to whom the Romans belong, to whom also the apostle feels indebted for preaching the name of Christ (Rom 1: 6, 14). Actually if the Church of Rome had been founded directly by one of the apostles of the Lord Christ, the apostle would not have written in the same Epistle to the Romans, "I; have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation." (Rom 15: 20) The apostle Paul was known among the twelve apostles as apostle to the uncircumcised (the Gentiles) (Gal 2: 7, 11), so he was more deserving to preach in the capital of the Roman Empire. He expressed his wishes to go to Rome and preach the faithful there, but until he wrote that Epistle to them he had not gone there for many hindrances prevented him from realizing this wish (Rom 1: 10-13, 15: 22). Moreover the apostle had been used to preach in the cities and trade centers of the Roman Empire, so it was natural that he longs to preach in Rome itself as well, especially that he enjoyed the Roman citizenship for which he took pride (Acts 22: 28).

The writer of the Book of Acts refers to the desire of the apostle Paul to go to Rome by the words, "Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" (Acts 19: 21)

The Lord stood by him and said to him, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." (Acts 23: 11) And he actually went to Rome and preached there but when he was taken as a prisoner for trial.

The Book of Acts did not mention the time or the way in which the church was founded in Rome, but it only says that when the apostle Paul was sent from Jerusalem to Rome as prisoner, he found in Puteoli where he found faithful brethren (Acts 28: 13, 14). When he and those who were with him approached Rome, the brethren heard about them and came to meet them as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns (Acts 28: 15). Nevertheless there were Christians in Rome before the arrival of Paul the apostle there and preaching them. We also read in the Acts that when Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth, he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. So the apostle went to them (Acts 18: 1, 2). Aquila and Priscilla with whom the apostle stayed because he was of the same trade were Christians before meeting with Paul the apostle, because it was not mentioned at all that they embraced the Christian faith through him. Based on all this we can deduce that before the year 50 AD in which the persecution waged by Claudius there had been Christians in Rome.

The apostle Paul introduced his ministry program in (Acts 19) saying that after he had been there he must also see Rome, but by this he did not mean that there were no Christians in Rome and that he would go there to preach the gospel for the first time. His words should be interpreted by comparison with the words in (Acts 18: 2, 28: 13) which reveal that there had been Christians in Rome not only before the year 61

AD (the year in which he went to Rome), but also before the year 50 AD (the year of the persecution by Claudius).

If then faith in Rome did not start directly through Paul the apostle, nor directly through any of the apostles of the Lord Christ, there would be controversy in the church history in this respect concerning the founder of the Christian church there. However, it is established that faith in Rome had been founded through a number of unknown Christians who had heard the preaching of the name of Christ, some of whom also had heard the apostle Paul in the cities where he had preached during his Missionary Voyages. Moreover in the period of preaching the gospel the Roman Empire was characterized by free and easy movement within its various parts. The connection between the parts of the empire and the capital was continual for many reasons, especially for trade. No doubt among those who moved there had been Christians who went to Rome from the big commercial cities like Antioch, Ephesus and Corinth where the apostle Paul had preached and founded churches. If we take into consideration Chapter 16 of the Epistle to the Romans in which the apostle sends his greetings to many although he had not yet gone to Rome, we will find an explanation for the existence of such faithful to whom he was sending greeting and who afterwards became Christians through his preaching in cities like Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. Those went to Rome and to them Paul the apostle addressed his Epistle.

But how could Paul the apostle get acquainted with the conditions of the church in Rome, and from where did he know of the presence of those people there? Undoubtedly that was through Aquila and Priscilla whom he had met in Corinth and established a close relationship with, being of his same trade. To them also he sent greeting in his Epistle to the

Romans, saying, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." (Rom 16: 3, 4) Base on these words we perhaps can say that the foundation of the church in Rome is due to the work of these two saints and the work of the church that was in their house (Rom 16: 5) (see also: 1Cor 16: 19; Acts 18: 19, 2, 24, 26; 2Tim 4: 19). This conclusion is supported by the testimony made to them that they explained the way of God more accurately (Acts 18: 26).

Nevertheless many Catholic writers, based on these facts about the faith of the Romans that it is spoken of throughout the whole world (Rom 1: 8; 15: 14), suppose that such faith must have a great character that led it to that extent. That Character they supposed was the apostle Peter who had been sent from the church in Jerusalem to Rome to establish the faith there as they had sent him before with John to Samaria (Acts 8: 14). The Catholic church also alleges that Peter the apostle after coming out of prison to the house of Mary, Mark's mother, and after telling them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison and asked them to tell James and the brethren of it, he departed to Rome, for the Acts say, "And he departed and went to another place." (Acts 12: 17) They suppose that this other place was Rome, and he went there, founded the church, and became its bishop for about 25 years, from the year A. D. 42 to 67. But this allegation has no support from history, for Peter the apostle was in Jerusalem when the Council was held in A. D. 49 or 50 (Acts 15: 7), and a few years later Peter went to Antioch where he met with Paul the apostle (Gal 2: 11). Certainly Peter the apostle was not in Rome in the year 57 or 58 AD when Paul the apostle wrote his Epistle to it, otherwise Paul the apostle would have mentioned the name of Peter the apostle with

the many other names he mentioned in Ch. 16 of the Epistle and would have sent him greetings. Furthermore Peter the apostle was not in Rome since that year up to the year A. D. 62 when Paul the apostle was in prison and wrote from Rome the Prison Epistles in which he sent greetings to many of those who had been with him in Rome, but he did not mention the name of Peter the apostle among them. So, if we understand from (Acts 12: 17) and (1Cor 9: 5) that Peter made missionary voyages, we cannot nevertheless understand from this that he went to Rome.

In brief we conclude that the church in Rome began by the work of unknown believers, some of whom had heard to the speech of Peter the apostle on the Day of Pentecost and others to the words of Paul the apostle in his missionary voyages. Then the church was organized afterwards by Paul the apostle, whereas Peter the apostle went to Rome by the end of his life, for he was martyred there with Paul the apostle.

The members of the Church in Rome

Undoubtedly the church in Rome was not founded and composed only of Christians from Jewish origin, but also of believers from the Gentiles. This can be deduced from the same Epistle, for the apostle addresses his words to the Jews when he refers to the sin of Adam (Rom 4, 5: 12 and in many other places, see: Rom 2: 17-3: 8, 29; 4: 16), and to the Gentiles when he speaks about the deviation of Israel and acceptance of the Gentiles (Rom 1: 6, 13, 15: 16, 18). It is even affirmed that the majority of the members of the church were from Gentile origin, because the Jews always resisted the new faith while the Gentiles embraced it. The apostle refers to the resistance of the Jews and their refusal to share

the blessings of salvation especially in three chapters of the Epistle (Ch. 9-11). And in the Book of Acts there is a mention of those who listened to Peter the apostle on the Day of Pentecost that they included people from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (Acts 2: 10). Those proselytes were of the Gentiles in Rome who had embraced Judaism.

Validity of the Epistle

There are many evidences (internal and external) that prove the validity of the Epistle to the Romans and its ascription to its writer Paul the apostle. No dispute had arisen in the past ¹concerning its validity, but it rather received general acceptance. However, in late eighteenth century some people made attempts to deny its validity, but such an attack was rejected and had no influence.

1. External Evidence:

Since the first century we find a trace of the teachings of the Epistle to the Romans in the writings of the fathers. For example you can compare between:

1) The First Epistle of Clement of Rome to Corinth and the Epistle to the Romans in the following texts:

1Cor 36, 51	and	Rom 1: 21
1Cor 47	and	Rom 2: 24
1Cor 50	and	Rom 4: 7, 8, 9
1Cor 33	and	Rom 6: 1
1Cor 35	and	Rom 1: 29
1Cor 32	and	Rom 9: 4
1Cor 61	and	Rom 13: 1, 2

¹ Eusebius: Church History 3: 5, 6

2) The Epistle of Ignatius and the Epistle to the Romans in the following texts:

- a. The Epistle of Ignatius to Smyrna (1) and Rom 1: 3
- b. The Epistle of Ignatius to Tralles (8) and Rom 2: 24
- c. The Epistle of Ignatius to Ephesus (18) and Rom 3: 27
- d. The Epistle of Ignatius to Ephesus (19) and Rom 6: 4
- e. The Epistle of Ignatius to Magnesia (5) and Rom 6:5; 8:7, 29
- f. The Epistle of Ignatius to Magnesia (6) and Rom 6: 17
- g. The Epistle of Ignatius to Magnesia (9) and Rom 7: 6
- h. The Epistle of Ignatius to Ephesus (1) and Rom 9: 23
- i. The Epistle of Ignatius to Tralles (1) and Rom 14: 17
- j. The Epistle of Ignatius to Ephesus (1) and Rom 15: 5

3) The Epistle of Polycarp and the Epistle to the Romans in the following texts:

The Epistle of Polycarp	4	and	Rom 6: 13; 13: 12
	10	and	12: 10
	3	and	13: 8
	6	and	14: 10, 12

The validity of the Epistle is also affirmed by the writings of Irenaeus, Tatian, and Athenagoras, in addition to its being included in the Muratorian Canon.

2. Internal Evidence:

The validity of the Epistle also is affirmed by the fact of the similarity between its content and the other Books of the Holy Scripture, whether of the Old or the New Testament, as well as the other Epistle of Paul the apostle, as in the following examples:

Compare between:

Rom 3: 4	and	Ps 51: 4
Rom 3: 10-12	and	Ps 36: 2
Rom 4: 3, 9, 22, 23	and	Gen 15: 6
Rom 4: 17	and	Gen 17: 5
Rom 4: 18	and	Heb 11: 12; Gen 15: 5
Rom 5: 5	and	Ps 22: 6
Rom 5: 5	and	Ps 25: 3, 20
Rom 8: 36	and	Ps 44: 23
Rom 9: 7	and	Gen 21: 12; Heb 11: 18
Rom 9: 9	and	Gen 18: 10, 14
Rom 9: 18	and	Ex 14: 4, 17
Rom 10: 5	and	Lk 10:18; Gal 3:12; Lev: 18: 5
Rom 10: 19	and	Deut 32: 21; 1Cor 10: 22
Rom 11: 1, 2	and	1Sam 12: 22
Rom 11: 9, 10	and	Ps 69: 22, 34
Rom 12: 19	and	Deut 32: 35; Lk 21, 22; Heb 10: 30
Rom 15: 9	and	Ps 18: 50

Many other examples do exist and all of them are evidence that the Epistle to the Romans included teaching which conforms with the teaching of the Holy Scripture with both its Old and New Testaments and with the teaching of Paul the apostle in his other Epistles.

Features of the Epistle and Purpose

Although Paul the Apostle in general did not present his views in a systematic way, his Epistle to the Romans yet is the closest of his Epistles to the organized harmonious presentation. Paul the apostle adopts one

style in all his Epistles, in that all the Epistles contain two main parts: The first part is usually distinguished for the theoretical and educational feature by which Paul the apostle discusses the educational and dogmatic issues in a theoretical way. The second part of the Epistle is distinguished for the practical feature by which the apostle discusses the rules of the Christian behavior. The Epistle to the Romans in particular handles almost perfectly the feature which the apostle Paul called "my gospel" (Rom 2: 16; 16: 25).

The core of the gospel preached by the apostle Paul may be briefed in that justification is only attained by the belief in Christ Jesus not by the works of the law. The big issue which Paul the apostle faced during his preaching to the Jews was the connection between the law of Moses and salvation (justification). The Jews on the other hand supposed that salvation is the fruit of the works of the law, which meant that they did not understand the wisdom behind the law. Actually the law was not given to the Jews as a goal but as a means leading to belief in Christ. Therefore Paul the apostle had to stress on this fact to the Jews and call them to believe on the Lord Christ, because it is faith rather than the works of the law that saves.

Paul the apostle mentioned that both the Jews and the Gentiles needed justification. The Epistle to the Romans, the same like the first and second Epistles to the Corinthians, is characterized by vitality, It is a calm epistle meaning that it did not adopt an aggressive tone, and the argument with the Jewish thought was done reasonable and under control. The Epistle is written in a proper and balanced language, brief and definitive, building evidences and discussions on a logical and biblical basis.

As for the purpose of the Epistle, some people saw it as historical epistle addressing the issues that faced the church in the days of the apostle Paul and provided solutions for them. Other people saw it as a dogmatic epistle addressing infinite not temporal issues. In other words, some see that the Epistle to the Romans determine its style according to the request of the reader, while others see that the formulation of the Epistle in its present form was due to the apostle not to the circumstances and problems of the reader. Some others even suppose that the apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to the believers of the Gentile background, while others suppose that it was written to the believers of the Jewish background. In general we can summarize the various views concerning the purpose of writing the epistle in the following three views:

1. Those who suppose that the Epistle has been written for dogmatic purposes and it included a systematic presentation of the topic of salvation. But some would ask if Paul the apostle had meant to present the topic of salvation in an objective infinite way not confined to the church in Rome, why was the Epistle addressed to Rome not to any other church?
2. Some suppose that the Epistle to the Romans is dialectical, because the apostle Paul presents faith facts with special reference to clarify the situation of the Jews and Judaism regarding the gospel he was preaching. This means that we cannot ignore the dialectical element in the Epistle. Nevertheless, one would say why do we not consider Paul the apostle discussing laws in general not only Judaism?
3. Some others suppose that the Epistle to the Romans is a reconciliation epistle, by which the apostle meant to unify the Jews and the gentiles in one epistle. No doubt we cannot ignore the

importance of this factor in the Epistle to the Romans, but on the other hand we cannot consider it the sole purpose of the Epistle to the Romans.

We would rather say that the Epistle to the Romans has been written to achieve these three purposes together.

Paul the apostle in the first part of his epistle expresses his desire to visit Rome and preach there as he did to the other nations (Rom 1: 1- 15). He also expresses his desire to visit Rome in Ch. 15 of the Epistle, where he says, “But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.” (Rom 15: 23, 24) Therefore we can say that Paul the apostle sent his Epistle to the Romans to pave the way to his travel there or to prepare the faithful there for this visit. Moreover through Aquila and Priscilla the apostle had known much about the conditions of the church there so he wrote this Epistle to give answers to their problems as he had used to do in all his other epistles. The fact that the faithful were prepared and waiting for the apostle is evident in that as the Book of Acts states, when he went to Rome many brethren went out to receive him (Acts 28: 13-15). So, the main goal was not as some Catholic Scholars allege that the apostle visits Spain and on his way stop over in Rome, but the visit to Rome was actually a main goal. But the Catholic authors who adopt this view meant to ascribe the foundation of the Church in Rome to Peter the apostle, and as Paul the apostle said he did not want to preach where others had preached so Paul the apostle meant to stop over in Rome on his way to Spain. Actually Paul the apostle as said before expressed his deep

desire to visit Rome and to have some fruit there just as among the other Gentiles, for he says, “Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you but was hindered until now, that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among other Gentiles.” (Rom 1: 13) It was a desire from long years past (Rom 15: 23). So, Rome was not for the apostle Paul a mere way towards Spain.

On the other hand, although the Epistle was addressing Jewish views contradicting the sound teaching, the apostle Paul did not deal with the issue in an aggressive way, but he praised their faith which was spoken of throughout the whole world (Rom 1:8; 6:17). Moreover Paul the apostle expresses his great sorrow and continual grief in his heart because of the deviation of the Jews who sought salvation through works of the law rather than through faith, and due to their attitude towards the faithful who were from the Gentiles. The Epistle to the Romans meant to introduce Christianity as a public religion for all mankind not for a certain people in particular, because some of the faithful in Rome were from a Jewish origin while some others were of gentile origin.

In fact the Epistle to the Romans presented the essential Christian facts, a presentation done by such a great person like Paul the apostle. He speaks about Christ, who He is, and what His Saving act is. Therefore the Epistle had a dogmatic feature, for it speaks about man’s justification not through the works of the law but through faith and God’s grace. Besides presenting these essential theological facts, the apostle Paul also had practical objectives as said before, for the apostle never wrote to merely present spiritual issues in a theoretical way, but always to strengthen the faithful and establish the faith. This practical objective forms the final part of the Epistle, from Chapter 12 to the end. Although the Epistle deals

with some spiritual facts which are also presented in other epistles, these facts are presented in this epistle in a more organized way.

The Integrity and Unity of the Epistle

With respect to the integrity and unity of the Epistle there are two problems:

1. First Problem:

In some manuscripts the glorification which Paul the apostle included at the end of Chapter 16 of the Epistle (Rom 16: 25-27) is included at the end of Chapter 14.

2. Second Problem:

In spite of the belief in the validity of the Epistle, some scholars held that the last two Chapters of the Epistle, or at least some parts of these Chapters were added later to the Epistle and had not been written by Paul the apostle himself. Marcion for instance quoted from the Epistle without these two Chapters.

Concerning the First Problem:

Doubts arose very early concerning these verses at the end of Chapter 16, since the days of Origen. This is because some manuscripts put these verses at the end of Chapter 14, while others put them in their present place. Some of the evidences on behalf of putting them at the end of Chapter 14 include the following:

1. The Epistles of the apostle contain scattered praises not at the end as the case in the Epistle to the Romans.
2. It is not suitable that the apostle adds a glorification closely related to the core of the Epistle at the end after a list of greetings to many persons with no link between both.

3. The glorification is closely related to the theme of the Epistle as referred to in verses (14:11; 15:11).

However, we do not find any fault with keeping these verses in their present place, because they are found in this place in some old manuscripts, and also because Paul the apostle does not follow a systematic way in presenting his views. It is also noticed that Chapter 15 ends with the usual closing prayers which the apostle is used to in his other Epistles, as in the verse, “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” (Romans 15: 33). In (Romans 16: 20) the apostle says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”

This means that the Epistle in three places includes the usual blessing of the apostle (Romans 15: 13; 16: 20, 25). Nevertheless this does not mean that the parts stated after these words are added by somebody other than the apostle himself. It rather means that the apostle tried each time to conclude his Epistle, but there appeared new additions needed.

Concerning the Second Problem:

Some consider Chapter (15) added to the Epistle and not forming a main part of it originally. The reasons they introduce are:

1. Marcion did not use it.
2. Verse (8) of this Chapter which reads, “Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers”, cannot be ascribed to the apostle Paul. Verse (19) of the same Chapter which reads, “... in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to

Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ,” likewise is not in conformity with the humble spirit of Paul the apostle. Furthermore, the verses (24, 28, 29) are contradicting the verse (Romans 1: 10- 15).

The first issue is weak, because Marcion has omitted other parts as well of the New Testament which are original and valid.

Concerning the difficulties related to the second issue, they are mere explanatory, easy to refute and not reaching the level of problems. We would inquire concerning Verse (8) for instance of the aforementioned Chapter, Why can we not ascribe it to the apostle Paul? The apostle says in this verse that Christ has come to offer salvation to the Jews (the circumcision), and this reveals God’s faithfulness and truth in fulfilling what He had promised the fathers of the Jews (see Psalm 89: 3). Moreover, had Paul the Apostle ever denied that Christ came to save the Jews as well, though His salvation was not confined to the Jews but extended to all mankind, Jews and Gentiles? Did the apostle not show his jealousy for his brothers and kinsmen the Jews (Romans 9: 3, 4)? He then spoke about the salvation of Israel through faith in Christ (Romans 11: 25- 32).

As for the point concerning Verse (19) of this Chapter and that it is not in conformity with the humble spirit of Paul the apostle, it is likewise a weak point, because the apostle here speaks about God’s work in him, not about his personal power. He says that God supported and strengthened the word of preaching by the miracles and the supernatural wonders which He granted him to work with the power of the Holy Spirit in the church. Therefore, with the support of God’s power, signs and

miracles the apostle could preach in Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum (north-west of Macedonia).

Regarding the alleged contradiction between Verses 24, 28, 29 of this Chapter and the verses in (Romans 1: 10- 15), it is unreasonable allegation, because we have no conflict here, but rather an assertion of the importance of preaching in Rome for the apostle Paul, and that he did not intend merely to pass through it on his way to Spain. He actually meant to preach in Rome as previously mentioned.

Regarding Chapter 16, some scholars consider it an addition to the Epistle, for the following reasons:

1. Marcion did not use it.
2. It was not usual for Paul the apostle to conclude his Epistles with greeting to individuals as in the above mentioned Chapter.
3. Paul the apostle was not in such a position that allows him to get acquainted to such a big number of people in the city of Rome.

The first objection needs not to repeat the previous answer.

The second objection is weak, because the apostle Paul concludes his Epistle to the Colossians with peace and similar greetings to individuals.

For the third objection, actually the position of the apostle allows him to get acquainted to many of the Roman citizens. He used to meet with many of them during his preaching in Asia and Europe, especially in

the main cities of the Roman Empire which was the center of activities and works.

Some suppose that Chapter 16, or part of it, is part of an epistle addressed to Ephesus, and that Phoebe travelled to Ephesus not to Rome. Furthermore they allege that Aquila and Priscilla were in Ephesus not in Rome, based on the text in Acts 18: 19; 1Cor 16: 19; 2Tim 4: 19). Moreover, Epaphroditus was called “the first fruits of Achaia to Christ” (Rom 16: 5).

Such an allegation is not supported. As for Aquila and Priscilla and their being in Ephesus with Paul the apostle a few months before writing the present Epistle, they might have been in Ephesus and from there they traveled to Rome. Also none of the names mentioned in verses 6-15 is said to have been in Ephesus. Besides, the names: Urbanus, Rufus, Amplias, Julia, and Junia are Roman names. It is also historically established that Stachys, Apelles, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Hermas, Hermes, Patrobas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, were among those who were of Caesar’s household (Phil 4: 22). They were contemporaries of Paul the apostle.

In conclusion we say that many of the famous manuscripts include these two Chapters (15 and 16) as part of the Epistle. Among these manuscripts are the Sinai Manuscript, and the Vatican Manuscript. Add to this the fact that the style of these two chapters is the same style of the whole Epistle.

Main Theme & Topics of the Epistle

The Epistle to the Romans presents the most important and most serious facts of Christianity. Besides, as we have already mentioned, the apostle aimed at practical objectives, because the apostle has never written for mere theoretical purposes or merely to present the Christian doctrines. He also aimed at strengthening the faith of those to whom his epistles were addressed, offering them the suitable solutions for the problems they were facing, whether such were problems related to concepts of the facts of faith or related to their life, as mentioned in the concluding chapters of the Epistle.

Here are the main theme and topics presented in the Epistle:

1. The gospel is God's power to salvation for everyone, whether Jews or Gentiles; for "The just shall live by faith." (Rom 1: 16, 17)
2. The Gentiles likewise are responsible before God (1: 18-20), for their faith and worship of the creation did not lead them to believe in the Creator (1: 21-25). As each of them lives according to his own whims, they fell in the basest things and evils (1: 26-32).
3. Responsibility extends from the Gentiles to those whom they judge from among the Jews, for they practice the same things for which they judge the others (Rom 2: 1-14). God renders to each one according to his deeds without partiality to one people against the other. The sin of the Jews is represented in their disobedience to the voice of conscience (2: 5-16). The Jews have no excuse nor their judgment for disobedience and

rebellious is decreased because of having the promises and for keeping the law of circumcision (2: 17-19).

4. Nobody can deny the advantage of the Jew over other peoples because they were committed the oracles of God, but they lost these advantages because of breaking the law. They became no more distinguished from the Gentiles, as it is written, “there is none who does good, no, not one.” (3: 1-9) Therefore the whole world became guilty before God (3: 19, 20). There became no more reason for the Jew to boast, because righteousness is not the fruit of the law of deeds but the law of faith, for which both the Jew and the Gentile stand equal as both are in need to believe in Christ, “since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.” Is this making void the law? Nay, but establishing of the law (3: 21-23).
5. The apostle also mentioned that the Old Testament, the same as the New Testament, has taught that justification is not by deeds but by faith. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (4: 1-8), not by circumcision (4: 9-12). He became the father of many nations (4: 18-22). But, “Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.” (4: 23, 25)
6. By this justification we have “peace with God” (5: 1), and we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (5: 2). We enjoy the grace of God’s love, because “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His

blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (5: 1-11)
“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.” (5: 12-20)

7. Therefore, those who were justified by the grace had died to sin and freed from its authority, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (6: 12-14)
8. As in the case of marriage, if the husband dies, the wife is released from the law of her husband, so that she is no adulteress if she marries another man, so also a Christian, since the old man in him has died, he is released from the law by which the whims of sins had been working in his members bearing fruit to death, and became married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead that we should bear fruit to God (7: 1-4). However, this does not mean that the law is sinful, because the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just and good. Actually man has experienced division in his personality, for sin formed another person within man, therefore the apostle says, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” (Rom 7: 15-24)
9. Chapter (8) speaks about the fruit of the life of salvation in Christ, or the state of the saved man. Sin no more have power

over those who live in Christ, for they have become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit who strengthens every weakness, and gives triumph over the whims of the flesh. They have moved from the state of slavery to the state of children and heirs to the everlasting inheritance (8: 1-18). In patience and hope the Faithful suffer as the Lord Christ suffered the passion of the cross, so that they may be glorified with Him. The creation, likewise was subjected to futility ... will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (8: 19-27). All things are managed by God and directed for good go those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose, whom He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (8: 28-31). God's love worked all these wonders through Christ for the sake of the Faithful, to give them freely all things in Him (8: 32-39).

10. The apostle addresses the problem of "election": how the Jews who God had elected and gave the promises did not believe in Christ, and therefore are deprived of the fruit of the life of salvation in Him? Nevertheless God is always faithful in His promises. He is not the cause of the rejection by the Jews to Christ, but He being the Lord of everybody has arranged everything according to His eternal purpose. For fulfilling His promises He chose Abraham and Isaac, then He chose Jacob instead of Esau, "For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'" (Rom 9: 11-13) God actually works in individuals as well as in groups as

Creator having complete authority to whom all creation shall submit (Rom 9: 15-18). As for Israel, they did not attain to the law of righteousness, because they had not sought it through the way of salvation but relied on the works of the law (9: 30-33).

11. The apostle speaks about righteousness through faith, which has become accessible by everybody, because God is near to everybody. Therefore both the Jew and the Gentile can obtain salvation “The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” (10: 8-10) But what if Israel has refused to obey God?! For the Scripture says, “I have stretched My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

12. Nevertheless God’s promises must be fulfilled and can never be hindered by human behavior. So not all Israel rejected the word of salvation, for some of them accepted God’s word and believed in Christ (11: 1-10). Therefore, on one hand their fall and separation from God was not inclusive (11: 5), and on the other hand it served God’s purposes, for, “through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.” (11: 11-15) Moreover, Israel themselves will be saved (11: 25-32). Therefore man’s sole duty is to glorify God and submit voluntarily in love to His will, “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things.” (11: 36)

13. From Chapter 13, the apostle gives moral advices to the Church of Rome:

- a) A Christian has to present to Christ good deeds, and present himself wholly as “a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable to God.” (12: 1) And as individuals vary in the gifts they have, so all are members in one body in Christ, and individually members of one another (12: 4, 5). So we ought to be affectionate to one another with brotherly love (12: 10-21).

- b) Christian should submit with obedience to the governing authorities (13: 1-7), and not to owe anyone anything except to love one another (13: 8-10), and never to forget that the day of the Lord is near (13: 11-14).
- c) The strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak for the edification of the others, because Christ for the salvation of our souls did not please Himself, but endured the reproaches of those who reproached Him (15: 1-6). So the Jews and the Gentiles ought to bear with one another, as the Lord Christ loved all without distinction (15: 7-33).

Date and Time of the Epistle

No doubt the Epistle to the Romans was written in Corinth, for we read in Chapter (16) that Paul the apostle was a guest of Gaius when he was writing the Epistle (Rom 16: 23). Gaius is mentioned in the First Epistle to the Corinthians as one of the Corinthian Christians baptized by Paul the apostle (1Cor 1: 14). The apostle also commended Phoebe their sister who was a servant of the church in Cenchrea (a port in Corinth) (Rom 16: 1). It is believed that it was Phoebe who carried the Epistle to Rome.

The date of writing the Epistle is probably 57 or 58 AD. Evidence of this can be found in some verses of the same Epistle and in the Book of Acts. In the Epistle we read that the apostle wrote it while on his way to Jerusalem, carrying charity sent from Macedonia and Achaia to the saints there, for he says, "But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem." (Rom 15: 25, 26; 1Cor 16: 1-5) And in the Book of Acts we find mention of this voyage of Paul the apostle to Jerusalem carrying charity, then passing through Macedonia and Helas (Greece) for the last time, then as the Acts say, "When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" (Acts 19: 21)

Again we read, "After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to him, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months." (Acts 20: 1-3)

This event took place in the life of Paul the apostle about the year 57 or 58 AD, the time of writing of the Epistle.

Survey of the Content of the Epistle

The Epistle is composed of two parts: Educational and Practical. In the Educational Part the apostle speaks about justification by faith in Christ, whereas, in the Practical Part, the apostle speaks about the life and conduct of a true believer.

The Educational Part contains the first section of the Epistle up to the end of Chapter (11), while the Practical Part contains the last section of the Epistle, beginning with Chapter (12) to the end of Chapter (16).

The apostle introduces to the Epistle by an Introduction which takes from the first verse of Chapter (1) to the seventh verse of the same Chapter. So we can give the following outline of the Epistle:

Introduction (Rom 1: 1-17)

This Introduction contains part of Chapter (1), from Verse (1) to Verse (17), with the following main points:

- Paul the apostle defines his mission (Rom 1: 1,2)
- Christ the focal point of evangelism (Rom 1: 3-7)
- Growing faith (Rom 1: 8)
- Worship in the spirit (Rom 1: 9)
- Longing for evangelism (Rom 1: 10-15)
- Subject of the evangelism (Rom 1: 16, 17)

1] The Educational Part (Justification by Faith)

(Rom 1: 18- 11: 26)

First: The nature of Justification and the need for it (1: 18-5:21) -

This includes the following:

a) The need of everybody for justification (1: 18-3:31). It deals with the following points:

1. Punishing the Gentiles for their evils (Rom 1: 18-28)
2. Examples of evil conduct (Rom 1: 28-32)
3. God's treasured wrath against the Jewish people (Rom 2: 1-8)

4. There is no partiality with God (Rom 2: 9-11)
5. The written law and the natural law (Rom 2: 12-16)
6. The Jewish between knowledge and conduct (Rom 2: 17-24)
7. Outward worship (Rom 2: 25-29)
8. God's faithfulness and man's lies (Rom 3: 1-4)
9. Are good deeds necessarily linked with evil deeds? (Rom 3: 5-8)
10. All have sinned (Rom 3: 9-18)
11. God's righteousness is revealed apart from the law (Rom 3: 19-31)

b) Faith as a principal condition for justification. Example from the life of Abraham (Rom 4: 1-25) – this includes the following points:

1. Abraham is justified by faith (Rom 4: 1-3)
2. Life of righteousness between work and faith (Rom 4: 4-8)
3. The promise to Abraham was given by the righteousness of faith not by the works of law (Rom 4: 9-16)
4. The greatness of Abraham's faith (Rom 4: 17-25)

c) Sufficiency of faith for justification (Rom 5: 1-21) – dealing with the following points:

1. The righteous have peace by faith (Rom 5: 1-11)
2. Death in Adam and salvation through Christ (Rom 5: 13-21)

Second: The results of justification by faith (Rom 6: 1- 8:39) –

This includes the following topics:

a) Holiness in Christ (Rom 6: 1- 7:6) – indicating the following points:

1. The justified shall not walk in sin (Rom 6: 1-14)
2. The justified bear holy fruit (Rom 6: 14-23)
3. Freedom from the law (Rom 7:1-6)

b) The law and the falling man (Rom 7:7-25) – including the following points:

1. The law and the sinner (Rom 7: 7-13)
2. The relation between the sinner and the law (Rom 7: 14-25)

c) The life of blessedness for those born in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1-39) – including the following points:

1. The new life given by the Holy Spirit to the justified (Rom 8:1-17)
2. The suffering of the creation because of sin, and the hope in the coming glory (Rom 8: 18-25)
3. God supporting our spiritual life (Rom 8: 26-39). This includes the intercession of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8: 27, 28), and God's care for the believers (Rom 8: 28-39)

Third: The issue of unfaithfulness of Israel (9:1- 11:36) – including the following subjects:

a) God's faithful promises in spite of the unfaithfulness of Israel (Rom 9:1-33) – covering the following points:

1. The sorrow of Paul the apostle because of Israel (Rom 9:1-5)
2. The issue of election (Rom 9:6-33)

b) Judging Israel because of their shameful stand (10:1-21) – covering the following points:

1. The Jews establishing their righteousness and rejecting God's righteousness (Rom 10:1-4)
2. The law, faith, and justification (Rom 10:5-13)
3. The Jews rejecting the gospel (Rom 10:14-21)

c) The future of the Jews with regard to salvation (Rom 11:1-36) – covering the following points:

1. What does salvation mean to the Jews? (Rom 11:1-10)
2. The Jews are called to believe in Christ (Rom 11:11-36)

**2] The Practical Part (Life of the True Believer)
(Rom 12:1- 16:27)**

This part is composed of the following topics:

First: Commandments to be followed by whoever seeks to lead a true Christian life: (12:1- 15:13)

This Section deals with the following subjects:

a) Exchanged duties among the Christians (12:1-21) – This covers the following points:

1. Introduction (12:1, 2)
2. Duties of the believer in a Christian society (12:3-21)

b) The duties of the Christian towards the society (13:1-14) – This covers the following points:

1. Duties of the individual towards the state (13:1-7)
2. Love to the neighbor as a social duty (13:8-10)
3. Proper behavior by putting on the Lord Jesus (13:11-14)

c) Dealing with the weak in faith (14:1- 15:13) – This covers the following points:

1. God is able to make the weak in faith to stand (14:1-12)
2. Commandments to the strong in faith (14:13-23)
3. Christ teaches us not to please ourselves, but each one to please his neighbor. Therefore the Jews have to accept the Gentiles (15:1-13)

Second: Conclusion of the Epistle:

In conclusion the apostle mentions his desire to visit Rome, and he sends greetings to some of his acquaintances there (15:14- 16:27) – He deals with the following points:

a) Causes of writing the Epistle, and requests: (15:14-33)

1. Causes (15:14-24)
2. Requests (15:25-33)

b) Commending and greeting to many: (16:1-27)

1. The apostle commends Phoebe the servant of the church in Cenchrea (16:1-2)
2. The apostle sends greeting to many (16:3-16)
3. Warnings against false doctrine (16:17-20)
4. Other greetings and glorification of Christ's name (16:21-27)

=====+=====

Chapter (1)
Introduction (Rom 1:1-17)
Paul the Apostle Defines His Mission¹

The verses (1-2) “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures” (Rom 1: 1, 2)

"Paul": The apostle Paul had been given by his parents the Hebrew name “Saul”, meaning “desired”. Probably he got the name “Paul” afterwards when he became a Roman citizen. Probably also he got this name because it is similar to his original name “Saul” in the Greek language, for both names only differ in the first letter of each. Saul in Greek is written “Saulos”, which are the same letters of the name Paul except for the first letter “P” instead of “S”, “Paulus”. In the Book of Acts likewise, in the first chapters, the apostle calls himself “Saul”, and from Chapter (13) to the end of the Acts, his name is mentioned “Paul”. In the Epistles on the contrary he is always called by his name “Paul”.

"Servant": The word “servant” was used in the Old Testament for the prophets of God as in, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveal His secret to His servants the prophets.” (Amos 3: 7) “I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets.” (Jer 7: 25) “Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes.” (Jer 9: 6). In the same manner Moses, Joshua the son of Nun, and David were called God’s servants (Josh 1: 2, 24: 29; Judges 2: 8; Ps 86: 2, 4)

¹ Refer to: Trampas, Expositions on the Epistles of the New Testament (in Greek), Part 1, Athena 1956

Paul the apostle boasted in calling himself, “a servant of Jesus Christ”, for servitude to Christ leads to freedom. A servant of Christ is free from the servitude of fleshly lusts, and is not tempted or attracted by the worldly pleasures. Those who take Christ as their Lord are not subject to the authority of Satan. Servitude to Christ bears at the same time the meaning of freedom, power, and liberation from the world and its desires. A servant of Christ lives on the earth as a heavenly person, free from the bonds of material, and although living in the flesh walks in the release and freedom of the spirit.¹

“Jesus Christ”: The word “Jesus” is the parallel of the Hebrew word “Joshua”, which means “Jehovah saves”. This word denotes the human nature of Christ, whereas the word “Christ” denotes His being anointed by the Holy Spirit.

The name “Joshua” was familiar amidst the Jews (Ex 17:9; Col 4:11). This name was given to the Son of God on His Incarnation as a private name according to the command of the angel of Joseph before His birth (Mt 1:21). The name “Jesus Christ” was frequently used (Mt 1:1, 18; 16:21; Mk 1:1; Jn 1: 17). And in the Book of Acts the name used is “the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16; 19:5). In the Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude, those who accompanied Christ in the flesh, use the name “Jesus Christ”, for this was what they had experienced. They knew Jesus first then they saw Him as Christ on His resurrection. Paul the apostle on the other hand knew Him first in His heavenly glory (Acts 9: 1-6), so he expressed this experience with the words “Christ Jesus”, which name he used frequently as an expression of this experience. So, the name “Christ

¹ For more explanation of words refer to the annex in the Commentary on the Epistle in Arabic

Jesus” refers to Christ in His eternal existence, who emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Phil 2: 7). The name “Jesus Christ” refers to Jesus who had been rejected, disdained, and afterwards glorified (Phil 2: 11). In other words, the name “Christ Jesus” denotes His grace, while the name “Jesus Christ” denotes His glory.

“Called to be an apostle”: The word “called” – in Greek “klytos” indicates a call to special privileges or a special work. In the Epistle to the Romans the apostle mentions the call to the privileges of the gospel, saying, “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” (Rom 11: 29) And in the Epistle to the Ephesians he says, “... that you may know what is the hope of His calling.” (Eph 1: 18) The call to the salvation is characterized by its generality (1Tim 2:4,6; 2Cor 5:15; 1Jn 2:2).

The apostle referring to his call describes himself as, “called”, thus desiring to assert that he had been called and he responded. Paul the apostle likewise describes the believers as “called to be saints”. The apostle also is affirming the divine factor in his call. By this he wanted to prove himself equal to the twelve apostles who the Lord Christ called to the holy ministry. The value of these words appears in particular in the epistles in which the people to whom the epistles were addressed deny him his right to the ministry.

“Separated”: In Greek it is “aphwrismenos”, derived from the verb “aphwrizw”, which means “appoint” or “dedicate”. The word also means “separates firmly from the others” (Mt 13: 49). It is also used to mean “choose” or “elect” (Acts 3: 2; Rom 1:1; Gal 1: 15).

The apostle states that God, with His foreknowledge, separated

him, appointed him, chose him, and elected him to serve the gospel of God. It is God then who chose the apostle Paul and who defined the field of his ministry. A true minister is one who received the call for the ministry from God first, and the first pre-qualification for a successful ministry is God's election of the minister. A call for the ministry must come from God, without which condition the way of the minister would not succeed and his ministry would not prosper.

“The gospel”: In Greek “euaggelion” consisting of two parts: “euaggelos”, which mean “good news” (Mt 4: 23; 9: 35). The word also means “teachings of the gospel” (Mt 26:13; Mk 8:35), and metaphorically means “preaching and evangelizing” (1Cor 4:15; 9:14). It never came in the New Testament to mean “book”. The apostle then mentions the aim of choosing him: to preach the gospel, that is, preaching the kingdom of God and the disappearance of the kingdom of Satan, preaching the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection from the dead, and everlasting life, and in particular preaching the good news as in the Septuagint Version (2Sam 18:20, 25, 27; 2Kgs 7:9).

“God”, “the gospel of God”: The apostle ascribes the gospel to God, because God since the past times had arranged the plan for the salvation of mankind. This salvation was realized in time by the coming of the Lord Christ, glory to Him, on the earth. In other places of the Epistle, the apostle calls the gospel “the gospel of Jesus Christ”, because the essence of the gospel or the good news is the coming of the Lord Jesus and the Redemption He accomplished for mankind.

“... which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures”: This means that the gospel of God or preaching

salvation for which the apostle Paul was appointed to minister, had been promised before through the prophets, “as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets who have been since the world began.”¹ God from old times had prepared the salvation plan for mankind, which salvation was realized by the coming of the Lord Jesus when He accomplished the Redemption and paid the debt of sin. It is worth noting that the words “in the Holy Scriptures” are mentioned in the Greek text without the definition article, thus translated to be translated without “the”. This is intended for focusing on the attribute of holiness of the Scriptures, for holiness is the assurance of the divine origin of these Scriptures.

Christ the Focal Point of Evangelism

“concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, through whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.” (Rom 1:3-6)

Naturally the apostle after that was to speak about Christ the focus of evangelism and the essence of the joyful news, so he said about Him, “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh.” The apostle had to refer to the connection between Christ and David in the flesh, for the Jews were waiting for Christ “the Son of David”.² It is noticed that the word “His Son” is stated in the Greek text with the definition article “the”. This is meant to affirm

¹ Lk 1:70 (cf Tit 1:2, 16:25,26; 2Sam7:12)

² Mt 22:42 (cf Mt 1: 22; 2Tim 2:8; Rev 22: 16)

the unique original sonship of Christ by nature, not by adoption. The word “flesh” in (Rom 3:20) refers to the whole human nature, whereas the phrase “according to the flesh” indicates that Christ who is the Son of God by nature has become the Son of Man according to the flesh. Therefore, Christ has two sonships: one of God, and the second of man. He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man.

The apostle further speaks about Christ, saying, “...declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” “His Son Jesus Christ our Lord”¹: It is noticed further that the word “declared” (oristhentos) does not mean that Christ has acquired a certain status which He had not before, or that He became afterwards the Son of God while He had not been before. The word here means that He admitted His sonship to God, and that He is truly the Son of God. He appeared in this state, and in this rank He was preached and witnessed to, and in this rank everybody saw Him. The words “with power” refer to the many miracles which the Lord Jesus worked, which proved His power, or rather His supernatural power, from the Holy Spirit, witnessing to Him as the Son of God. However, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is one of the most important evidences of His being the Son of God. The apostle calls Christ “our Lord”². In the Old Testament, in the Septuagint, the word “Lord” was used to refer to the Deity.

Paul the apostle continues his talk about Christ, saying:

“... through whom we have received grace and apostleship.”

¹ Rom 1:4 (see Acts 13:23, 24; 1Tim 3:16; Ps 11: 1)

² 1Cor 8:6; Tit 2: 9-11

The word “grace” refers to the gift of salvation which all mankind received, and the word “apostleship” refers to a special gift which the apostle Paul received as an apostle or a minister to Christ. Here the apostle speaks about two gifts he received through Christ: he first received the gift of salvation which all mankind share, because salvation is granted to the whole world. Then he speaks about a special gift by which he became an apostle and evangelist of the name of Christ.

Then the apostle Paul says:

“... for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among who you also are called of Jesus Christ.”

The words “for obedience to the faith” mean that we should accept the issues and facts of the faith with all obedience and submission, for the faith facts are not such facts which we use for intellectual conviction and material evidence, but rather inspired facts requiring obedience. The act of believing is to obey and accept and recognize the declared facts and follow them in our conduct and actions. Among the nations called to believe, the apostle Paul mentions the Romans, for they were called to be Jesus Christ own people.

Those to whom the Epistle was written:

“To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 1: 7)

The apostle makes it clear that the Christian call is not confined to one people only, but it is a public message addressed to all nations, not a particular people. Among those nations the apostle refers to Rome, and describes the Romans as “beloved of God, called to be saints”. The words, “beloved of God” denote God’s love extended to all mankind,

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (Jn 3: 16). God in His love called us to be saints, i.e., sanctified by the Holy Spirit. We should take God’s love as an impetus for us to walk in holiness, and to become holy as He is Holy. A life of holiness is represented in living with God and separation from the world’s evils and corruption.

The apostle concludes the talk about his message praying for the Romans to have grace and peace from “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”.

It is to be noted in these words that the apostle speaks about the Father and the Son as equal in essence, for grace and peace come from both of Them. Concerning the word “grace”, it means God’s mercy and the resulting good and goodness. The divine grace mainly is represented in what God grants us, whether forgiveness of sins or sonship, and in particular the salvation God granted to mankind, which salvation demanded Him to give His only begotten son, which is the utmost mercy of God and His love to mankind.

The Growing Faith:

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” (Rom 1: 8)

After the inception of the Epistle, which took the first seven verses, the apostle speaks about the faith of the Romans which spread and became known in the whole world, saying, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” It is noteworthy that the apostle begins with giving thanks to God, because the merit for the faith of the Romans, and its

growth, flourishing, and spreading is mainly due to God. He is the cause of all good things and the cause of extension of faith. In all things we have to thank God, and we, as ministers in the Lord's vineyard, have to be aware of God's work and action in our ministry. Let us be on our guard lest we give credit to ourselves and to our efforts, and let us remember, "I planted, Apollos watered, but Gove gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase ... For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, you are God's building." (1 Cor 3: 6-9) Here the apostle does not give thanks for something related to him, but for the others! Such was the love between the apostle and the faithful; he feels that their good is his. The subject of thanksgiving is the faith of the Romans, for their belief in Christ was so strong and high that it became spoken of throughout the whole world. It is a glorious image of the Church of Rome in the first century AD. We hope that it be the image of our church in the present time. Again the words, "through Jesus Christ" refer to the fact that all gifts are received from God granted us through Christ, without whom we can never receive any of God's gifts.

Worship in the spirit:

"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." (Rome 1: 9)

True worship is that which comes from one's heart and spirit, not mere external apparent worship. So, here the apostle speaks about worship or service with the spirit, from one's heart and mind (with conviction), willingly (with one's free will and choice), with all one's emotions (from all the heart with longing and desire). To such spiritual worship or service the apostle speaks in other parts of his Epistles, as in

the Epistle to the Philippians where he says, “we worship God in the Spirit” (Phil 3: 3). Also in the Second Epistle to Timothy, he says, “God, whom I serve with a pure conscience” (2 Tim 1: 3) (See also Heb 9: 14). In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle likewise says, “Let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” (Heb 12: 28) And in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, he says, “For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness – God is witness.” (1 Thess 2: 5)

One of the characteristics of the spiritual worship is its being fervent, never becomes tepid or weak. It continues unceasingly, constantly with no pause. For this those who have this type of worship, “they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple” (Rev 7: 15) furthermore, the words of the apostle “I make mention of you” reveal continual feeling of responsibility for the others “I ... do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” (Eph 1: 16)

Longing for evangelizing:

“... making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established – that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.” (Ro, 1: 10-15)

In this Epistle the apostle reveals his deep longing to visit the Church of Rome and to preach there. He prays God to realize for him this desire, “making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.” However, this desire is pending on “God’s will”. Yes, all our desires ought to be in the will of God. The apostle had this desire to go to Rome a long time before, but he did not realize this desire until he was writing that Epistle to them. God permitted it that some hindrances occur preventing this desire to be fulfilled until the suitable time, “Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.”

What are the apostle’s motives for evangelism?

First: The apostle was not urged by an external factor, but by a deep desire and longing, “For I long to see you”, and by personal readiness “I am ready to preach the gospel to you.”

Second: The apostle had a deep feeling of responsibility of evangelizing to the others, like an indebted person who wants to pay off his debt, “I am a debtor.”

Third: The apostle wanted to establish the Romans in faith, “that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established”.

Fourth: The apostle wanted to be encouraged when being amidst them, seeing their faith. And on the other side the Romans become encouraged by seeing the apostle’s faith, “that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”

Fifth: The evangelism should be to all people, no difference between one people and the other, or between one class and the other. No

geographic, historical, or cultural barriers should hinder preaching, "... both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise."

Sixth: The apostle wanted to have some fruit in Rome as had been in other nations, "... that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles."

Subject of evangelism:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith.'" (Rom 1: 16-17)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

In Verse (16), the apostle mentions the subject of evangelism or the subject of his Epistle, i.e., "the gospel of Christ". The apostle feels proud of being elected by God to carry out this superior honorable ministry. So he speaks about the effectiveness and power of the gospel in realizing salvation. This gospel which focuses on the person of the crucified Christ is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes". The gospel offers this salvation, the Jews first, because they were the first to be attached to God and they received His promised for salvation, then the Greeks because they also were called to this salvation. For salvation is not confined to the Jews but extends to all people and granted to whoever believes whatever their nation, "Christ is all and in all" (Col 3: 11).

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith.'"

Through the gospel the righteousness which God grants to the faithful is revealed. The source of this righteousness or salvation is not the works of the law, but faith. Salvation is not realized by the works of faith, but by the belief in the crucified Christ. Also this salvation is not granted only to those who had the law, but to whoever believes. This teaching, which says that righteousness or salvation as a result of faith rather than a fruit of the works of law, had been referred to in the Old Testament, for Habakkuk the prophet said, “But the just shall live by his faith” (Habak 2: 4). The word “righteous” refers to those who keep the law. This means that those who keep the law live not by the works of the law but by faith. Whereas the word “live” refers to the spiritual life, the life of grace which freed us from the dominion of servitude of sin and brought us to the life of glory waiting for us afterwards as heirs to the kingdom with Christ. Therefore the phrase, “from faith to faith”, means that righteousness is realized on the one hand through faith, and on the other hand granted to whoever believes.

First – The educational part of the phrase, “justification by faith” (Rom 1: 18- 11: 36):

Punishment of the Gentiles for their evils

This part includes: The nature of justification and the need for it (Rom 1: 18- 5: 21); the need of everybody for justification (Rom 1: 18- 3: 31)

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in

them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For the reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.” (Rom 1: 18-28)

Beginning from verse (18):

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,” to the end of the Chapter, the apostle speaks about the works of the idolaters which raises God’s wrath and anger. God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against whoever does not walk in goodness and respect towards God’s commandments, and against whoever disobeys the moral law and denies or strays from the truth through idolatry and shameless life. Those idolaters have suppressed the truth, i.e., concealed it

and made it unapparent through wrong worship and shameful conduct, they “do not obey the truth, but only unrighteousness” (Rom 2: 8) (see also 1 Thess 2: 16), and “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” (Jn 3: 19, 20)

“Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them”:

Those idolaters reject God although the true knowledge about God – as far as the human mind can comprehend – is manifest in them. God has prepared their minds to accept this knowledge and manifested it to them very clearly. The seed of faith which God has implanted within everybody so as every sound thinking and straight mentality can attain it by nature, for God “did not leave Himself without witness” (Acts 14: 17). By nature man is inclined to faith in God, though he may not have a sound idea about this God. The Book of Acts gives an idea about the misconceptions about the divinity, for “when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycanonian language, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own

ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” (Acts 14: 11-17) This faith instinct in spite of probable distorted concept about God was declared by Paul the apostle in Athens: “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To the unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17: 22-30)

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

God has manifested His knowledge and made it so clear that those who cannot see God’s complete perfection by bodily eyes can see it

through His creation, by their minds. When they meditate in this creation they can know the extent of God's power and might from eternity and fore ever and ever. They also can know God's glory and divine perfection, therefore they are without excuse, and can give no justification for non-believing. For God's eternal and everlasting power and divinity, which are referred to by Paul the apostle as "invisible attributes" can be understood as the cause of the whole creation. Paul the apostle here provides this natural evidence of God's existence, because the information about the creation needs a cause for their existence, who is the Creator. St. Augustine says in this respect:

[Lo, heaven and earth, came into existence, crying out: "Lo! We are created; we are created", because they are changeable and alterable, for every uncreated being has nothing that did not change or alter. Therefore they (heaven and earth) cry out joyfully that they did not come into existence spontaneously but were created. Before being created they had no existence by themselves.]¹

Job the righteous likewise says, "But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this, in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?" (Job 12: 7-10) The Psalmist also says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge." (Ps 19: 1, 2)

Isaiah the prophet likewise says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number;

¹St. Augustine, Confessions, translated by Priest Youhanna Al Helw, Catholic Press, p. 242

He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding.” (Isa 40: 26, 28)

The Lord Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, said, “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (Matt 6: 26-30)

And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” (Heb 11: 3)

“Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

The idolaters had no excuse, because, although from the created things and the wonders of creation, they knew God who created all these things with all wisdom and power, they did not glorify Him for His limitless perfections, nor gave Him thanks for His many gifts which He granted them. Rather by their false and misled thoughts held to futile

things. Therefore their hearts were darkened and they distorted the truth. This means that the shameful deeds of the idolaters against God were not the result of ignorance and lack of knowledge, but out of obstinacy, stubbornness and a spirit of disobedience and rebelling. A darkened heart distorts truth and misleads it in the minds. So what we need for the faith issues is not mere mind conviction, but also purity of heart and straightforwardness. But were the deeds of Christ and supernatural miracles not enough as evidence for the mind of His divinity? Yet, the scribes and Pharisees with their suborn hearts and stiff-nicks, and in the darkness of sin, rejected the Lord Christ and denied His divinity. The Lord Christ says about them, “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have not sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’” (Jn 15: 24, 25) “Now they have no excuse for their sin.” (Jn 15: 22)

This meaning is affirmed by Paul the apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians, indicating how the thoughts are darkened by the hard-heartedness. He says, “... having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of the heart.” (Eph 4: 18)

“Professing to be wise, they became fools.”

A strange thing about those pagans is that which you claim, that they behave wisely, while they actually behave with foolishness and ignorance. Therefore the apostle Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, says, “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become

wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness.’” (1 Cor 3: 18, 19) And Solomon the wise says, “A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident.” (Prov 14: 16) “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” (Prov 12: 15) “A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.” (Prov 12: 23) “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.” (Prov 18: 7) “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.” (Prov 1: 22) “For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them.” (Prov 1: 32) And the Psalmist says, "The fool said in his heart, ‘There is no God’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.” (Ps 14: 1)

“(They) changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.”

Those idolaters changed God’s incorruptible glory by material things in the image of the corruptible man, birds, beasts and creeping things. This is the same fault in which the children of Israel fell in the wilderness, as David the prophet said, “They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt.” (Ps 104: 19, 20) And Jeremiah the prophet said, “Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horrible afraid; be very desolate ... for My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns – broken cisterns that can hold no

water.” (Jer 2: 11-13) That is why the Lord’s commandment came to the people of Israel in the Old Testament: “Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.” (Deut 4: 15-19)

“For this reason God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.”

Because they went this shameful way against God’s dignity, God removed away from them His grace and left them to walk according to their evil lusts in all uncleanness, impurity and defilement. They went further as to dishonor their bodies, because sin leads to physical injuries in addition to spiritual harm. Many physical diseases are due to spiritual sins. That is why the Lord Christ commanded the sick people who He healed not to return to sin again.

Nevertheless the words, “God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts” do not mean that God led them to this evil way, but they mean that God removed away His grace from those who like evil and insist on it. God certainly gives chance to the sinners to repent, but if they do not respond to God’s voice and warning, and close their hearts against repentance, grace will depart and forsake them. In such a case they increase in their straying and deviation. This explains the words of the

Acts, "... who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness." (Acts 14: 16) And concerning the people of Israel who made a calf and offered sacrifices to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their own hands, the Acts say, "God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven." (Acts 7: 42)

"Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

Those idolaters exchanged the true God for false idols then they gave up their inner life and their hearts to worship the creation. Instead of honoring and worshiping the Creator they worshiped the creation. God showed His estimation for man in creating him in His own image and likeness, whereas man's heart darkened and his foolishness appeared in making God in his own corruptible image!

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing, what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

(See also Lev 18: 22, 20: 13; 1 Cor 6: 9) Because the idolaters worshiped the creation rather than the Creator, God permitted it to give them up to their shameful lusts, to the extent that their women changed the natural lawful relations to unnatural and unlawful relations. The same applied to men, for they changed their natural relations with women and burnt with evil lusts committed shameful deeds for one another. Thus

they received the penalty which they deserved for their straying and deviation and idol worship. They did harm to themselves.

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.”¹

As they did not judge soundly and did not want to have the true knowledge of God, so God gave them up to a mind unable to discern right between truth and falsity. The result was that they did what is not morally fitting or proper.

Grace is a gift from God to man, but if man behaved wrongly and corrupted his ways, he will deserve to be deprived of God’s grace and be given up to his whims and shamefulness. God is not in this case responsible, for responsibility is on the man, like a patient who refuses to obey the advice of his physician and chooses to treat himself although he is ignorant and inexperienced in this, his condition will become worse and the disease will increase. Here the Physician will not be blamed, but the patient will bear the result of his wrong doing. So long as he refused to obey the commands of the physician and his guidance, it is natural that the physician leaves him to treat himself as he wanted. The same applies to the way of God towards the sinner. As the physician refrains from offering assistance to the patient who disobeys his command and advices, so also God forsakes the sinner who disobeys His commands and commandments. In both cases the responsibility does not fall on God or the physician.

¹ For the fitting deeds see, (Matt 15: 19; Rom 13: 13; Lk 18: 11; 1 Cor 5: 1, 6: 9, 10; 2 Cor 12: 20; Eph 4: 31, 5: 3-5; Col 3: 5, 8; 1 Tim 1: 9, 6: 4; 2 Tim 3: 2-4; Tit 3: 3; 1 Pet 4: 3

Examples of evil ways

“Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Rom 1: 29-32)

After the apostle had spoken about the sins of the Gentiles in general, where he gave various examples of their evils and unfitting deeds, in addition to other previous examples, he mentions further many of these shameful deeds:

"Being filled with all unrighteousness":

The word in Greek also is “unrighteousness”, and it refers to evil in general, whereas the word “righteousness” refers to virtue in general. So an unrighteous person is an evil person, while a righteous person is a virtuous person.

Sexual immorality and wickedness:

The word “wickedness”, in Greek “ponyria”, means a person morally destroyed, pleased in doing harm to others without benefitting from this. The words “sexual immorality” denote prostitution, adultery, and debauchment.

Covetousness and maliciousness:

Maliciousness in Greek is “kakia”, which means a wicked intention towards others, or in other words bad inclination or bad moral feelings. Covetousness on the other hand in Greek is “pleonexia”, which is seeking to receive more than one deserve or ought to have.

Full of envy and murder:

Envy often leads to murder, as Cain did to his brother Abel.

Strife:

Strife bears the seeds of envy toward others, though not go far as to murder. The wicked person seeks to annoy others by fighting, dispute, and raising matters that deprive them of quietness and peace of mind and heart.

Deceit:

It is to make intrigues and plotting, work up conspiracies, deceit, fighting, cheating, delusion, and cunning.

Evil-mindedness:

This implies bad character, immorality, bad behavior, and misconduct.

Whisperers and backbiters:

A whisper is one who speaks badly and whispers bad things about others in secret, whereas a backbiter is one who defames others and raises discords against them publicly.

Haters of God:

Those hate God and abhor Him and abhor His commandments and commands.

The violent and the proud:

The violent are ready to insult and abuse others, while the proud usually show up what the others do not have, or behave haughtily, arrogantly or with a feeling of self-importance for things which the others are deprived of.

Boasters:

They are people who boast in their talk and attribute themselves things they do not actually have.

Inventors of evil things:

They invent and create new types of evil.

Disobedient to parents:

This means they do not trust their parents nor take their advices.

Undiscerning:

They lack understanding and reasoning, therefore they refuse any advices.

Untrustworthy:

They do not keep their promises to the others.

Unloving:

They have not the natural emotions which even the animals have.

Unforgiving and unmerciful:

They behave violently, never forgive others and treat them harshly and cruelly.

The apostle further says about those unrighteous people, “who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” It means that they do not do such wrongdoings and sins for human weakness and inability to do good deeds, but they do that with all willingness, longing and pleasure. This denotes intentional wrongdoing rather than ignorance and heedlessness.

=====+=====

Chapter (2)

God’s wrath treasured against the Jewish people

“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’, eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing

good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.” (Rom 2: 1-8)

“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”

Here the apostle warns the Jewish people who thought themselves distinguished from all other peoples because they alone know the true God, and they alone received the divine law. With this belief they trusted that they would escape God’s wrath and punishment, but the apostle reveals to them their wrong belief. If they really knew that God judges the sinners, and they themselves judge the sinners for their misconduct, by such judgment they fall under condemnation for judging the others and therefore deserve God’s wrath and punishment because they do the same things for which they judge the others. Let the Jew then, says the apostle, be aware of the result, for he put himself a judge to the others but at the same time does the same things for which he judges them. Here we recall the words of the Lord Jesus, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” (Matt 7: 1-4 – see also Jn 8: 7)

It also happened once that the scribes and Pharisees brought to the Lord Christ a woman caught in adultery, and when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery in the very act.” But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him

throw a stone at her first.” So those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. (Jn 8: 1-11)

“But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.”

The apostle makes it clear that God’s judgment differs from the human judgment, for people often judge others wrongly, and so many innocent were misjudged unjustly, while many wicked were considered innocent by people. But God’s judgment is just and true, not based on false evidence, but according to what man deserved. It is fair judgment. The Lord Christ therefore said, “If I do judge, My judgment is true.” (Jn 8: 16)

“And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?”

The Jew forgot that God’s judgment or condemnation is true and just, so he thought that he will escape God’s wrath although what he does deserves condemnation. So the apostle in this verse warns the Jew that he will not escape God’s judgment if he does the deeds that deserve judgment, saying:

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

The apostle reveals to the Jew his misjudgment and misunderstanding of god’s nature and will, not weighing matters soundly but relies on wrong hopes and aspirations. So he is despising God’s rich

goodness, forbearance and longsuffering. The Jew misunderstands God's rich mercy and goodness and great forbearance. God actually treats mankind with love and mercy. God suffers people long, not hastening in inflicting punishment. On the other side, people should understand God's wisdom, for He cannot accept evil or keep silent towards it to the end. If He shows patience and goodness, it is to lead us to repentance. He does not want that people perish but that everybody comes to repentance (2 Pet 3: 9) So, "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you." (2 Pet 3: 15)

“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

There are many hearts not moved by God's mercy not affected by His goodness. Thus was the heart of the Jew in the hardness of evil and depth of unrighteousness, and in the stubbornness of his evil will, he did not move towards repentance, nor did feel a need for it, but persisted in the way of deception and delusion. Some people may reject God by their minds under pretext that they have no enough reasonable and logical evidences to convince them to believe in Him. Not less evil are those who refuse God although they believe in Him with their minds, but their impenitent hearts refuse Him. Such refusal is not the result of ignorance, but coming from an obstinate heart although there are causes encouraging for repentance.

We must not forget that God who is characterized by mercy also is characterized by justice. If God's mercy is revealed in His patience and longsuffering, His justice also must be fulfilled. God's mercy leads to

repentance, so if the heart does not repent and turn from evil, man will be treasuring for himself wrath in the day of wrath and the revelation of God's righteous judgment.

“Who will render to each one according to his deeds”

God treats man according to his deeds. God “weighs the hearts” (Prov 24: 12) God's justice is an accurate scale that weighs man's deeds and judge them. He does not confine His judgment to the outward deeds but also to the inner deeds of the heart and renders to each man according to his deeds (Prov 24: 12).

“Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath.”

The first group comprises those who do all good things with patience and continuance. They are known for good deeds and patience. They are not satisfied only with mere knowledge of what is good and what is right, but go further to practice, doing, and behaving. It may be easy for a person to stop at seeking knowledge, but it is hard to behave according to such knowledge. It is not enough to know what is good, but more important to do what is good. Many can be teachers, but few are doers. Virtue is a practice and a deed, implementation, behavior and conduct, not mere knowledge, understanding and comprehension. Faith also is a practice, not mere mental knowledge. Therefore the apostle Paul affirms the importance of practicing. But many people misunderstood the concept of faith to Paul the apostle when they thought that it is faith in the mind not in practice. The importance of the practical aspect in our spiritual life is asserted by Paul the apostle when he connects good deeds

with patience. So we have not only to work, but to work with patience. Many start working but do not continue. They begin work at the early hours of the day, but they soon feel tired and exhausted, so they stop and do not continue long. They cannot endure the heaviness of work and the heat of the day. They lack patience and power to endure. Successful spiritual work is that which does not become blunt, fades, weakens, or become old or lose vigor. Any work cannot be crowned except after long bitter struggle. We should fight the good fight, finish the race and walk the way to its end if we want to receive the crowns of glory. Patience also appears in enduring tribulations and troubles which grow like thorns on the way of struggle.

These are the attributes of the first group about which Paul the apostle spoke, which is characterized by: patience in work and aspiring to heaven with patience in every good deed. Those who long for spiritual matters receive everlasting life and heavenly glory.

The Second Group includes those who are governed by the spirit of partiality, who aim at the success of what belongs to them (the apostle here addresses the Jews who prefer the victory of Judaism to the victory of truth). The spirit of partiality blinds the mind and prevents the sight from seeing the truth and the right. So we have to distinguish between holding to the truth and keeping the spirit of partiality. The spirit of partiality urges a person to hold to his own opinion and to insist on it and to do away with the views of the others. Here a person does not measure things with the measure of truth and falsehood, or truth and deception, but with the spirit of selfishness and self-love and the desire to conquer and win victory over the others, even though it may at the expense of truth and proper measures. The spirit of partiality does not encourage a person

to hold to the truth but to hold to his own opinion, whether it is right or wrong. With such a spirit of partiality, the Jews resisted the Christian call. Christianity came bearing truth, light and life to the world, but the Jews refused to walk in the truth and preferred to walk in the falsehood. They concealed the light to be hidden in darkness. They did not believe in the living Christ to continue lying in the tombs of sin. What the Jews needed in the days of Paul the apostle, as well as in every other age, is to set aside from their minds the spirit of partiality and look everything with the eye of truth. Had they done this, they would have recognized the beauty of Christianity and believed in Christ. But since they did not do this, they deserved the warning of the apostle against what awaits them on the Day of Judgment of God's anger and wrath.

There is no partiality with God

“Tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also to the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God” (Rom 2: 9-11)

A Jew used to deceive himself by feeling that he has peculiar privileges imagining wrongly that God chose him from among all other nations and gave him the law and the covenant, by which he got a peculiar standing. The Jew thought that God will treat him differently in a distinguished way, as if he will judge him according to a special heavenly law, while judging the other people with a different law!

In other words, the Jews used to separate their people from all other peoples of the world, thinking wrongly that God favors the Jews in treatment and does not treat them equally with the others. Therefore the

apostle made it clear that God's judgment is issued against every soul. By this he abolished the false division which the Jews set between their people and the other peoples of the world. God does not distinguish in punishment or reward between one race and the other, or one people and the other, for "God shows personal favoritism to no man" (Gal 2: 6); "for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes" (2 Chr 19: 7); "who without partiality judges according to each one's work" (1 Pet 1: 17); "In truth I perceive that God show no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." (Acts 10: 34, 35) "But he who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong which he has done, and there is no partiality." (Col 3: 25)

The apostle affirmed God's justice in His judgments for mankind. This justice appears in: First, in that God does not favor anybody, but treats everybody equally. Second, in that God repays tribulation and anguish for doing evil, but glory, honor and peace for working what is good.

Concerning the words "the Jew first and also to the Greek", they do not imply partiality, but they mean that God's covenants were given first to the Jews. It means that they earlier in time not in honor.

The written law and the natural law

"For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law,

by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” (Rom 2: 12-16)

“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.”

If God had given the Jews a written law, He also gave the other nations – the Gentiles – the natural law. Everybody is born by nature provided with this natural moral law. Actually the written law is the expression of the natural law written on the hearts. Therefore, the Jew will be judged according to the written law, while the non-Jew will be judged according to the natural unwritten law.

“For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.”

The Jews, as we have said, boast by merely having the law and that they listened to the law in the synagogue (Acts 13: 15, 15: 21; Lk 4: 16). So the apostle indicated to them that the just in God’s sight are not those who hear or know the law and what is in it, but those who act according to the law and keep it in their life, their behavior and their relations. If mere hearing the law had been enough to justify man, we can say that some of the Gentiles might have heard the law or knew its content. The same applies to the Christians, it may be hard to imagine that the teachings of Christianity are not known in any place in the world, but the matter is not mere knowledge. Justification is obtained by acting according to the commandments of the Lord.

“For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.” (Rom 2: 13-15)

The natural law works for the Gentiles as the written law works for the Jews, because the Gentiles, though they did not receive a written law, honor God and walk in virtue led by their natural moral law within them. They do what the written law commands although they do not have this written law, so they become a law to themselves, that is, their conscience. The action of the written law, enlightening the sight of the people that they may discern between truth and falsity, this action reveals how the Gentiles in their conduct have the law written in their hearts. This happens when their conscience bears witness to their works and when their inner thoughts rise up accusing or excusing them. Conscience for man acts like the written law to man, for a good conscience (1 Tim 1: 5) does the work of the written law, distinguishing between good and evil, and between truth and falsity. The conscience will one day give its testimony with all truth, honesty and power. At present we may be able to weaken the voice of the conscience and its reproach, but time will come when the voice of the conscience will ring strongly and powerfully, and its voice will prevail over any mouth, and its testimony comes stronger than a thousand witnesses. It is because who testifies witnesses only to apparent things within one's sight. But the testimony of the conscience on the other hand also includes futile works even the intentions and thoughts which have not come into actual action. Conscience may reflect God's

voice in man, bearing all its power and authority, all love for good and hatred for evil. The apostle compares the inner self of man to a court having natural laws to apply, and it seeks the testimony of the conscience, and the thoughts complain and accuse or seek excuses.

"... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

The apostle mentions that the righteousness of those who keep the law will be revealed on the Day of Judgment when God will judge man's works, whether apparent or hidden, according the gospel which the apostle preached (the gospel of Jesus Christ). He will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ the Just Judge.

The Jew: judged by his knowledge and works

"Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written. (Rom 2: 17-24)

"Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,"

In the second Chapter, from verse 7 to verse 24, the big difference in the life of the Jew, between the Jew's knowledge of the law and his breaking the law and contravening God's commandments. The Jew always boasted of his name as a Jew, and relied on the law as if it were a safe foundation, and boasted of God as if God was only his own God!

"... and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law."

Here the apostle mentions that the Jew knows God's will and distinguishes between good and evil things, because he has been instructed by the law. The Law has given the Jew the knowledge and the ability to discern between what is true and what is false or futile. But the Jew used to apply the law in words not in practice.

"... and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness."

A Jew has great self-confidence, and convinces us that he is a leader and a guide to the idolaters whose eyes are blinded, and that God has set him as a light to those who are in the darkness of ignorance and deceit of the futile idolatry.

"... an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law"

The Jew thought himself a teacher and an educator, capable of enlighten those who lack understanding and teach and educate those who are still in the spiritual childhood. He thought that he has the full

knowledge and true education contained in the law (Acts 13: 15, 15: 21; Lk 4: 16).

"You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?"

The Jew who knows the law well, behaves shamefully in a way different from what the law commands. It is as if his task is confined to mere knowledge and teaching, but not to be committed to do what he knows or teaches. Actually the knowledge of the law and any other knowledge imply a big responsibility and a bigger condemnation to the person who does not comply with what he knows or teaches. Therefore James the apostle says, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things." (Jas 3: 1, 2) So the Jews have become subject to a stricter judgment, for while they boast of having knowledge and education and of having the law, they behave contrary to what they received. They set themselves as teachers to the other, but they do not commit themselves to act according to what they know nor teach themselves. They commit the same acts which they command others not to do. They steal although they forbid stealing.

"You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written." (Rom 2: 21-24)

The Jews preach virtue and good conduct, and command others not to commit a violation like stealing or adultery or idolatry, yet they

commit these same violations which they warn people against. They commit adultery, steal, rob temples, and all other forbidden acts in violation of the commandments of the law. That was the character of the Jew as witnessed by the Holy Scripture in both Old and New Testaments.

Micah the prophet says, "Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money.

David the prophet likewise, addressing Israel, said, "When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit." (Ps 50: 18, 19)

Also the Lord Christ said, addressing the Jews, "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law?" (Jn 7: 19) And the Lord warned the teachers of the law, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matt 23: 2- 4)

So, as we have seen, the Jews boast of having the law, but by violating the law they dishonor God. Because of their disobedience and insubordination God's name is dishonored and blasphemed among the Gentiles. The Lord God mentioned this on the mouth of Isaiah, saying,

"My name is blasphemed continually every day." (Isa 52: 5) And on the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, God says, "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward. The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them." (Ez 39: 22- 24)

Deficiency of the Jewish Worship Practices

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become un-circumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his un-circumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."
(Rom 2: 25- 29)

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become un-circumcision."

Paul the apostle in this part (verses 25 to 29) speaks about the deficiency of the Jewish worship practices which are revealed in two things:

1. Not abiding by the commandment of the Lord.
2. Focusing on outward worship practices rather than internal worship.

The Jew did not abide by all the Lord's commandments, but only on some of the commandments of the law. A Jew was very careful to fulfill the commandment of the circumcision in its literal meaning, leaving the other commandments. Therefore the apostle clarified that fulfilling the commandment of the circumcision alone is of no benefit at all. Circumcision is beneficial only if it is linked with keeping all the other commandments of the Lord. On the other hand if the Jew is satisfied with the circumcision and violated all the other commandments of the Lord, it will be of no value in the sight of God. It will be like un-circumcision, as if not done at all.

"Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his un-circumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?"

The uncircumcised Gentile if keeping well the commandments of the divine law written within his heart, his un-circumcision will be counted for him as circumcision. Moreover, the uncircumcised Gentile may judge the Jew who had received a written law and got circumcised but violated the other commandments of the law. So, true circumcision which the Lord commands is fulfilled by removing away the un-circumcision of the hearts. See what Jeremiah the prophet says: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, let My fury come

forth like fire, and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." (Jer 4: 4)

St. Paul the apostle also says in his Epistle to the Galatians, "Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." (Gal 5: 2-6)

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter".

In these two verses the second deficiency of the Jewish worship practices is revealed, that it is such a worship that cares only about the outward rather than the inward. The Jewish worship focused on the flesh, not on the spirit, fulfilling the commandments of the law literally. They understood circumcision as an outward operation in the flesh not in the heart. But actually the Lord's commandments in the Old Testament did not mean mere outward practices, but aimed at cleansing the whole man and purifying his conscience and heart. Therefore the apostle gave a definition of the Jew by which a true Jew is defined, that he is not a Jew outwardly only, but one who devotes his inward life also. Furthermore true circumcision is that of the heart done by the Holy Spirit not by the letters of the Mosaic Law which has no power and cannot change or

renew the heart. The Old Testament likewise mentioned the inward life and the circumcision of the heart, as in the Book of Deuteronomy: "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live." (Deuteronomy 30: 6) And in the address of Stephen the martyr before the council said to the Jews, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears!" (Acts 7: 51)

"... whose praise is not from men but from God."

Such a true Jew who cares about the circumcision of the heart does not wait for praise from people, because praise is based on outward relations which may be deceitful. A true Jew wins the pleasure of God who knows the secrets and hidden thoughts of the hearts. Therefore Paul the apostle says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "... but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts; and then each one's praise will come from God." (1 Cor 4: 4)

=====+=====

Chapter (3)

God's Truthfulness and Man's Falsehood

"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That

You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.'" (Rom 3: 1- 4)

"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?"

The Jews protested against the teachings of Paul the apostle, thinking that he has denied the value of the Mosaic Law and the preference of the covenants made by God to His people in the past. For if according to the teaching of the apostle, God wants inward devotion to Him, and this can be achieved even by a Gentile who walks according to the natural law, what then is the advantage of the Jew or the profit of circumcision? In other words what will distinguish a Jew from a Gentile and set him in a higher rank?

The Old Testament has mentioned what distinguishes God's people from the other nations, as in the Book of Deuteronomy: "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?" (Deut 4: 7, 8) The apostle himself referred in the same Epistle to what distinguished God's people in the past, saying, "... who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen." (Rom 9: 4, 5)

"Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God"

Paul the apostle objected to their protesting, for God does nothing for no avail. There are actually many advantages which the people in the past had obtained, but the apostle did not mention all of these advantages, but was satisfied with the principal and most important of them, which is God's trust in the people and entrusting them with His covenants. David the prophet mentioned the same, saying, "He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them." (Ps 147: 19, 20) And also, "He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel." (Ps 103: 7)

"For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?"

However, some Jews were not faithful for what they had received, therefore the question arises: Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Will their unfaithfulness in keeping God's covenants and promises make God's faithfulness and love of righteousness futile? God's faithfulness means that He is true in fulfilling His covenants and promises. God never waives His covenants because of the violations of some Jews or their disobedience. That is why Paul the apostle says in his Second Epistle to Timothy, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." (2 Tim 2: 13)

"... Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.'"

Nobody can claim that God would waive the covenants and promises He has given to mankind. Actually all things assert and prove that God is true in His word, whereas man is a liar concerning his false

accusations against God that He does not fulfill His promises. If people would put God in a trial, all matters will reveal that God is righteous in His words and true in His promises. This is what David the prophet expressed in his Psalms, saying, "... that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge." (Ps 51: 4) "I said in my haste, all men are liars." (Ps 116: 11)

Is Good Necessarily Linked With Evil?

"But if our unrighteousness demonstrated the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'? – as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just." (Romans 3: 5- 8)

"But if our unrighteousness demonstrated the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?"

From the above it is evident that God's truthfulness and righteousness are demonstrated the more when compared to man's lies and evil as also asserted by David in his Psalms. So if this is the case, and our evil has such good results, demonstrating God's glory and love of righteousness and true promises, there should be – according to man's logic – nothing justifying God's wrath against our evil. Also it will not be fair that the evil and the wicked be exposed to punishment.

"For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?"

Every sinner may protest against God's punishment, saying, 'If God's love of truth and His truthfulness have increased to a greater glory to Him due to my sin, when then should I be punished as a sinner?' This means that sin should not be counted as sin, nor the wicked be judged as a sinner so long as such sin led to righteousness and revealed God's glory.

"And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'? – as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just."

Paul the apostle was accused for his teachings, as if he permitted committing sin and doing evil as lawful things and even necessary to bring good! It is a strange logic disapproved by the apostle Paul. And if good came from evil doings, this does not mean that evil is necessary for bringing good. For good may be realized without need for the existence of evil, and God's truth may be demonstrated without need that man lie. Moreover, when the wicked commits evil, he does not do that with an aim to realize righteousness or to reveal God's love. Briefly speaking, evil is not linked essentially with good, so a sinner deserves punishment for his sin even if this sin or wrongdoing caused God's glory to be revealed.

All Are Under Sin

"What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who

does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known.' There is no fear of God before their eyes."
(Romans 3: 9- 18)

"What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin."

In the two preceding chapters, the apostle Paul stated that sin prevailed over all mankind and extended to the Jews and Gentiles together. As for the Gentiles, the apostle says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom 1: 18) For the Jew on the other hand the apostle says, "... he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter." (Rom 2: 29) This means that the Jews were not better than the Gentiles concerning abiding by the moral and spiritual commandments, for all were under sin.

"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.'"

The state of humanity worsened to the extent that there is no more any one who is righteous. If such a righteous one exists, God will support him as He had done in the days of Noah when He supported Noah, and as He had done for Sodom and Gomorrah when He supported Lot. However, the apostle here declares it that all have gone astray, and the

human mind has become corrupt, no one understands. People no more distinguish between truth and falsity, and between good and evil. Therefore they dropped into the corruption of sin, and there is no more one who seeks earnestly to know God. All have gone out of the way of virtue, and none walks in good, as David the prophet had said before in his Psalms, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no good.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one." (Ps 14: 1- 3) Solomon the wise likewise said, "For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin." (Eccl 7: 20) So humanity lacked the pure mind, and became connected with the darkness of sin. Man became unable to understand and know the moral and religious facts, and none seeks the knowledge of God.

"Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips;"

The apostle Paul continues his talk about the corruption in which mankind fell, and he quotes from the Psalms some similes, as from Psalm five, "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue. Pronounce them guilty, O God! Let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You." (Ps 5: 9, 10) This description of the wicked also is found in Psalm one hundred and forty, "... who plan evil things in their hearts; they continually gather together for war. They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; the poison of asps is under their lips ... who have purposed to make my steps stumble. The proud have hidden a snare for me, and

cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set traps for me."
(Ps 140: 2- 5)

The throats of the wicked are like open tombs, for they plan death and dig tombs for the others. With their tongues they deceive and flatter hiding evil purposes behind their flatteries. Death is under their lips like the poison of asps. They are described in this way because they speak evil words that come from their sinful lips like poison. So they are like asps pouring poison from their mouths like poison.

"... whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

The mouths of those people are full of cursing against God, and full of bitterness, that is, bad words against others. In Psalm ten we have an example of such curses against God uttered by the wicked as well as bitter words against others. David the Prophet in this Psalm says, "His mouth (i.e., the mouth of the wicked) is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue is trouble and iniquity ... He has said in his heart, God has forgotten; he hides his face; he will never see it ... Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, 'You will not require an account.' ... The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless ... Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their hearts; You will cause Your ear to hear, to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more." (Ps 10: 7- 18)

"Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known."

Those wicked people are described as having strong desire to commit evil. They run to evil and their feet are swift to shedding blood.

They usurp the rights and the dignity of the others. They lost peaceful life with the others. In this regard Isaiah the prophet likewise said, "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace." (Isa 59: 7, 8) The same is stated by Solomon the wise, "For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood." (Prov 1: 16)

"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Those wicked people removed away God's fear from their hearts, as David the prophet says in Psalm thirty five describing the life of those who have no fear of God: "Fierce witnesses rise up; they ask me things that I do not know. They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul ... Attackers gathered against me, and I did not know it ... they do not speak peace, but they devise deceitful matters against those who are quiet in the land. They also opened their mouth wide against me." (Ps 35: 11- 28)

The Righteousness of God revealed apart from the Law

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God sent forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." (Rom 3: 19- 31)

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

The law of the Old Testament was given to those who were subject to the law and its instructions, that is, the Jews. The law itself judges those Jews so that they will have nothing to object to, but God's justice and righteousness will be revealed in judging and punishing them. So, the situation of the Jews will not be better than that of the Gentiles with regard to deserving God's punishment. Paul the apostle again says in his Epistle to the Galatians, "But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." (Gal 3: 22)

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

As said before the Jews boasted of having the law. Mere receiving of the law ensured for them a life of righteousness and salvation. However the law itself judged the Jews and condemned them because they failed to fulfill its commandments fully. Moreover, the law was not given to grant righteousness, but to chastise and lead to Christ so that we may be justified by faith, as the apostle says in the Epistle to the Galatians: "If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law ... But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3: 21- 26)

The fault of the Jews was clear in that they did not understand the purpose for which they were given the law. The apostle spoke in detail about this purpose in his Epistle to the Galatians and presented the reasons why the law was unable to give a life of righteousness to man. These reasons may be briefed in two main reasons:

1. The failure of the Jews to fulfill all the commandments of the law, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'" (Galatians 3: 10)
2. The promise of justification was not to be obtained by the law but by faith, as the apostle says, "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by

faith." (Galatians 3: 11) For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels (Galatians 3: 18, 19) Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3: 24). Nevertheless the words of the apostle Paul: "By the law is the knowledge of sin," do not mean the law is the cause of sin, but they mean that through the law we discover our spiritual state. The law here is like a mirror which demonstrates the faults and sins of people.

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

Apart from the law, God's righteousness was manifested (1 Jn 1: 2; 4: 9), and since this righteousness as we said before has nothing to do with the law, it will then be not confined to those who received the written law. Rather, faith, not the law, is the principal condition for obtaining justification. Moreover, since faith is something that all people can enjoy "without distinction", so justification from sin also can be obtained by all people, no difference between one person and another. Righteousness has been offered by God to whoever believes, therefore, the Gentiles also received the blessings of justification. By faith here is meant faith working through love.

The phrase "witness by law and the prophets," indicates that the teaching of the New Testament does not abolish the teaching of the Old Testament, but is rather witnessed by law and the prophets. The apostle declares that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." There is no distinction among people, for all have sinned and lacked that glory granted by God.

But how then can we get justification? The apostle answers, *saying:*

"... being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"

This means that all people have become justified and saved by the grace granted us, the sinners, by God. He freed us from sin by the redemption accomplished by Christ through the shedding of His blood on the cross. God's grace actually means His mercy upon the whole mankind, which has granted us freely without any virtue on our side the blessings of Salvation in Christ Jesus. So, justification and salvation are not given us for being worthy of them or as a reward for our works, since all have sinned as the apostle said. No human being has ever done anything by which mankind would deserve salvation. Nevertheless, in spite of the sins of all mankind, God's love for man granted them salvation freely. As the apostle says in other parts of his Epistles: "having been justified by the grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit 3: 7); And you who were dead in trespasses and sins "who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loves us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through

faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph 2: 1- 9) "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation." (2 Cor 5: 18, 19)

"... whom God sent forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,"

God offered Christ, according to His previous dispensation, that He might be the mediator of reconciliation between God and man, for whoever accepts Christ in faith. The reconciliation has been accomplished by the blood of Christ shed on the cross, where God's justice and righteousness have been demonstrated in His forbearance over the sins and the punishment until the coming of Christ. In the present time (the time of the New Testament), the Lord Christ offered His blood as a propitiation, by which God's justice and righteousness were revealed. Therefore people have no excuse to misunderstand God's justice because of His forbearance. As for Christ's atonement St. John the apostle says, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world;" "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn 2: 2; 4: 10)

Also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in Chapter nine, the apostle Paul speaks about Christ's propitiation, and compares between it and the propitiation of the Old Testament which had merely been a symbol

referring to that of the New Testament. The apostle says, "But into the second part (the holy of the holies) the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience – concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9: 7- 14; compare with Lev 16)

When comparing between the propitiation of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament, we notice the following:

1. The high priest had to go into the holy of holies once a year only, because the way to the Holies had not yet been demonstrated, meaning that the way to God was still concealed and sin was standing in the way as a wall of enmity between God and man.
2. The high priest had to offer a sin offering as a sacrifice for himself and for the people to atone for his and their sins. But the Lord Christ offered His blood once for all, and in this one time He

accomplished everlasting salvation for the whole world, extending to all generations in the past, the present, and the future.

3. The propitiation of the Old Testament was not capable with regard to conscience to complete who serves, but the propitiation of Christ is capable of purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God (See our commentary on Heb 9).

"... to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

The Lord Christ offered His blood as a propitiation to demonstrate God's justice at the present time, because God's justice necessitates the sentence of death as punishment for sin. So, when the Lord Christ offered Himself on the cross, He paid the wages of sin, that is, death, thus demonstrating God's righteousness at the present time. God, in His righteousness (that He might be just) was pleased to accept the sacrifice of the Lord Christ offered for the sins of all mankind. At the same time, He forgave and justified men from their sins, granting righteousness to whoever believes in Christ. However, God's justification for man does not mean merely judging that man is innocent, but it also means transferring man from the state of sin in which he was abiding to a state of godliness and good.

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith."

If justification is by faith, not by the works of the law as the Jews imagine, why then would people boast since their justification is not due to their works or virtues? Boasting should be by our faith in Christ "that no flesh should glory in His presence ... that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord'" (1 Cor 1: 29, 31); "not of works lest

anyone should boast" (Eph 2: 9); "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8: 2)

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."

This means that justification is free by faith, not by the works imposed by the law.

"Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? yes, of the Gentiles also,"

The circle of justification extended in Christianity to include whoever believes, because God is not for Jews only and nor will confine His blessings to them, but He is for the Gentiles as well, for one is God who they call: "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom 10:12, 13)

"... since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith;"

God is one for all, and He is ready to justify all, whether Gentile or Jews. But the principal condition for this justification is one, set by the One God, that is, faith. (See Mk 12: 29; Rom 4: 11, 12)

"Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

If the apostle Paul said that justification is gained by faith not by the deeds of the law, this does not mean that the apostle degraded the value of the law. On the contrary, this establishes the law, because the law itself had previously spoken of the promises which would be fulfilled

through faith in Christ. Furthermore, that God may forgive our sins and trespasses against the law, Christ was crucified.

The law is not mere commandments, but also promises, covenants and faith, and likewise becoming spiritual children of Abraham, all of which have been fulfilled through faith in Christ. The law actually is important for us even at the present time, because it reveals to us our past spiritual life and supports our faith. Christianity also did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it.

In Chapter (4) the apostle Paul, when speaking about Abraham, asserts the fact of establishing the law by faith, as follows:

- Verses 1-12 the apostle indicates that Abraham has been justified by faith.
- Verses 13-16 the apostle indicates the inheritance of the world has been given to Abraham by faith.
- Verses 17-22 the apostle indicates that Isaac was the fruit of faith.

So, justification, inheritance and offspring have been fulfilled for Abraham by faith, for faith did not make the law void but rather established it.

Here we would affirm that justification (dikaiwsis) is true change of man.¹ On one side it is blotting out of sin and condemnation, and on the other side it is implanting of a new life in holiness and righteousness. In other words, negatively it is forgiveness, and positively it is sanctification. And whereas such change is a necessary state and a basis

¹ Khristos Androtsos, the Creed of the Eastern Orthodox Church (in Greek), 2nd edition, Athens, 1907, p. 230-259

for salvation, then we may exchange the words "justification" and "salvation" and the deeds derived from them. Therefore, it is the same to say that a person is saved or is justified by faith and deeds. Nevertheless, forgiveness of sins and sanctification are two aspects of one thing that cannot be separated in time, as to say that sanctification is a phase following the phase of forgiveness. It is the same as in the case of the light, the moment it is put on, darkness is removed away. The same applies to man, when man is justified the divine grace cleanses him of sin and at the same time sanctifies him, or sanctifies him as far as it had cleansed him of sin.

Furthermore, the forgiveness of sin, according to the Orthodox Creed, is not mere covering of sin or not counting it as some would understand righteousness, but it is a process of blotting out of sin by which the justified becomes a child of God and has nothing displeasing to God, for his life has already been cleansed. A human judge declares the accused innocent, but does not make him instantly innocent. He merely declares it by words, but when God justifies a sinner He does not consider him righteous while still a sinner, but He makes him actually righteous. Certainly the sins that had been committed did not become inexistent, but the state of sinfulness which ensued from committing sin and made man the son of wrath is removed away completely by the diving justifying power.

=====+=====

Chapter (4)

Faith as a basic condition for Justification The Example of Abraham's Life (Rom 4: 1- 25)

Abraham Justified by Faith

"What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God. for what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" (Romans 4: 1- 3)

"What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?"

In the fourth chapter the apostle wants to affirm what he had stated in the preceding chapter, that man is justified by faith, not by the works of the law. He gives as an example the justification of Abraham. The apostle asks this question, meaning did Abraham realize his spiritual life, and did he obtain justification by his own natural powers and works of the flesh without assistance from God's grace? The words "according to the flesh" mean according to works, because works are accomplished by the flesh. So, did Abraham obtain justification as a result of works not as a result of his faith? We can pose the question more generally, "Can man be justified by faith or by the works of the law?" The apostle here was speaking about the conditions required for justification, and was addressing the Jews who believed that the works of the law are the sole condition for justification.

"For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God"

However, the apostle Paul answers his own question, indicating that Abraham did not obtain his justification by his works, for if Abraham had been judged by his contemporary men as righteous due to his good works, then he had something to boast of before those imperfect people, but his works did not give him the right to boast before God. In other words, people judge a person as righteous and good because of his apparent good conduct before them, but what causes admiration and praise by people is nothing compared by God's perfection and holiness. Therefore, what may give us a cause to boast before people, may not give us cause to boast before God.

"For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

The apostle supported his view by the statement about the justification of Abraham in the Book of Genesis, that he (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and the Lord accounted it to him for righteousness (Genesis 15: 6). So Abraham was justified by faith, and his faith was accounted for him as if he had kept the law and obeyed all God's commandments, so God justified him.

Paul the apostle affirms this teaching (i.e. Abraham's justification by faith not by works) in his Epistle to the Galatians, when he says addressing the Galatians:

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth ... This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? (meaning having begun by the grace of the Holy Spirit, now you are made perfect by keeping the commandments of the law which

you practice in the flesh, not by the renewed heart) ... Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (i.e. God has given you abundantly the grace of the Holy Spirit, and He works among you supernatural works, is it because you have kept the law, or because you have believed? Undoubtedly, because you have believed) Just as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith.' ... that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal 3: 1-14)

Life of Righteousness between Works and Faith

"Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds, are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sins.'" (Romans 4: 4-8)

"Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt."

What is the value of works for justification? Can we obtain the grace of justification by works? The apostle in the preceding verses spoke about the importance of faith and indicated the value of faith for granting us a righteous life, so can the works of the law do what faith does? Can it have the same value of faith? And what is the difference between wages or reward for one's works and the reward which a believer receives through faith? The apostle says that to him who works the wages are not counted as grace but as debt, which means that who works receives his wages not from the grace of the divine mercy, but as debt or wages for his work. This wages shall not be counted for him as grace nor be from the grace, but as a debt which he deserves. So, the path of works does not lead us to the grace of justification, but this is not given as a reward for some work but as a fruit of faith. Therefore the apostle also says:

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,"

By this is meant that who does not do the works of the law but believes on God, because of this faith God will justify him. Furthermore, the apostle Paul in another place in the same Epistle says, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace, otherwise work is no longer work." (Rom 11: 6)

This teaching of the apostle may be explained more by the Parable said by the Lord Christ about the kingdom, where He compared the kingdom of heaven to the landowner who hired workers for his vineyard and agreed with them for a denarius a day. But the landowner gave equal

wages to the workers who went to work late as those who went to work from the very beginning in the morning. In this Parable two kinds of reward appear: the reward for work done as a debt which a worker deserves, and the reward as a grace for those who came last yet received as the first (Matt 20: 7-14).

So, the apostle by his teaching wanted to indicate, as he had done before, that work cannot give the right to receive grace, for however great our works may be, the wages will be for a debt not as a grace. Therefore, works do not lead to justification. Nobody then ever did works by which he may expect to receive justification for them. On the other hand, those who did not work, meaning that they do not expect justification by their works, but they believe that God will forgive sinners and grant them salvation in Jesus Christ, by such faith they will be justified through the blessings of the blood of Christ Jesus.

"Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds, are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sins.'"

Actually David the prophet had taught the same teaching in his Psalms, therefore the apostle Paul quotes from him to support his own teaching (Ps 32: 1). David the prophet speaks about the justification obtained through the shedding of the blood of Christ on the cross. By this blood the wages of sin has been paid and the sins forgiven. Justification is based on God's mercy and grace, on His love and kindness, rather than on human deserts. The blessing received by man as indicated by David the prophet is not based on works, for that man who received the blessing received it without works after having his sins and trespasses forgiven,

and because the Lord did not impute to him sin. That person received justification as mercy from God not as a reward for his works.

**The Promise to Abraham was given by
The Justification of Faith
Not by the Works of the Law**

"Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith that it might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."
(Rom 4: 9-16)

"Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to

Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted; while he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised."

Asserting his statement that justification is by faith, the apostle Paul mentions that when Abraham was justified he was uncircumcised. So Abraham's justification was by faith not by the works of the law. Therefore, the blessing which David the prophet chanted, which we mentioned before, was not related to the circumcised alone, but extended to the Gentiles who had no written law nor were they circumcised.

"And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised."

Abraham did not receive justification by circumcision (i.e. by the works of the law), but received it as an external sign or as a seal affirming that he had received justification by faith. That faith was while Abraham was uncircumcised. That is why Abraham became a spiritual father to all those who are uncircumcised but have believed, and their faith is accounted for them as righteousness. Abraham also became the father of those Jews who had not confined themselves only to circumcision of the flesh, but they also walked in the faith in which Abraham had walked while still uncircumcised. So, the Gentiles were not under obligation to get circumcised or to do the works of the law so that they might receive justification nor was it enough for the Jews to rely on their being circumcised or on their doing the works of the law so that they might be

justified, for both the Gentiles and the Jews needed faith to obtain the life of righteousness. And by faith all become sons of Abraham.

"For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

The apostle Paul makes it clear that the promise to Abraham and his seed was to become heir of the world, that is, spiritual dominion for Abraham and his seed over the world. This promise was not given to Abraham through the law but through the righteousness of faith, as the apostle says also in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance." (Heb 11: 8)

"For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,"

If those who had received the law became righteous only by keeping it and became heirs of the world, there would have been no value of faith. Furthermore, God's promises would not be realized but would be made void, for He promised that inheritance will be given free, just by faith in Christ Jesus.

"Because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression."

In fact the inheritance was not given by the law, because the people had violated the commandment and this aroused God's wrath and deprived the people of the blessings of God's promises. On the contrary, where there is no law, there will be that which is called transgression of the law, "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed

when there is no law." (Rom 5: 3) "For apart from the law sin was dead." (Rom 7: 8) Also in the Epistle to the Galatians, the apostle repeats the reference to the connection between the law and the promise to affirm his teachings stated in the Epistle to the Romans. He says, "The law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God to Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." (Gal 3: 17) This means that the covenant given by God by an oath, and which refers to Christ, cannot be made void or abolished by the law which came after four hundred and thirty years. The law could only have made the covenant void and abolished it if only our inheritance had been given by the law. In other words, if we could obtain the inheritance and the salvation by the law, we would not obtain justification as a free gift but as a reward for our works and for our keeping the law and fulfilling its commandments. Rather God gave Abraham justification as a gift by a promise. So, if inheritance had not been a fruit of keeping the law and abiding by its commandments, why then God gave the law? The apostle answers this question, indicating that the law has been added to the promise in order to create within us the feeling of sinfulness concerning the violations and trespasses committed by us. The law was to continue its disciplining role until the Seed comes for whose sake the promise had been given.

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."

The law, as indicated by the apostle keeps us away from the inheritance and promises, therefore inheritance is given by faith. This inheritance has been given us not as a reward for keeping the law, but as a gift by God's grace. Thus there is no longer danger against God's covenants and promises, because this certainly will be realized to all Abraham's children, not only to those who had the law or who rely on it. The Gentiles will share this inheritance, for although they had not the law, they followed Abraham's faith and became his spiritual children. Through "faith" all mankind can become children of Abraham, and he can become the father of everybody.

The Greatness of Abraham's Faith

"As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations' in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.' And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification." (Rom 4: 17-25)

"As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations' in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;"

In this part of Chapter (4), Paul the apostle speaks in detail about the faith of Abraham and about God's promise to him that he would be a father of many nations. Those nations had not yet existed, but were to come into existence in future. Abraham believed that God who gives life to the dead and with His power brings into existence things that do not exist, those nations of whom he was going to be a father though not existence at that time, God will call them into existence afterwards. Moreover, he saw those non-existent things through faith as though they were existent actually.

As for God's promise to Abraham that he would be a father of many nations, the Book of Genesis also states: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 'As for me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.'" (Gen 17: 1-8)

As for God's power to raise the dead, the apostle speaking about Abraham's faith says, "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." (Gen 11: 19; see also 2 Cor 1:9)

And for God's power to call things which do not exist as though they did, the Lord says on the mouth of Isaiah the prophet, "Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand up together." (Isa 48:13)

"who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.'"

God gave Abraham the promises at the time when he was at the age of losing hope in having children, but through hope in God's power, Abraham believed that he would become a father of many nations, and that his offspring would be like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea in number. The Book of Genesis presents the story of Abraham's faith as follows: "Abram said, 'Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless ...? ...' And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, '... Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them ... So shall your descendants be.'" (Gen 15: 1-6)

"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb."

As Abraham was not weak in faith, he did not look to things with the measure of his natural bodily power to have offspring, for he had attained the age of one hundred and his body became unable to give

offspring. He even did not take into consideration this inability of his body (compare with: Gen 17: 17; Lk 1: 18; Heb 11: 11).

"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,"

Abraham did not at all doubt the truth of God's promise, but rather strengthened his faith and gave glory to God as if the promise has already been fulfilled. Faith here stood against "doubt" and against "weakness". Therefore Paul the apostle speaks about the role of faith in strengthening weakness, saying, "out of weakness, were made strong" (Heb 11: 34). The Lord Christ Himself speaks about such face void of any doubt or suspect, says: "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matt 21: 21, 22)

"and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

Abraham was completely convinced and with all confidence believed that the promise that he would have descendants in spite of his old age, God was able to do and fulfill.

"And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"

Having such full trust and confidence, God accounted it to him for righteousness (compare with Gen 15: 6).

"Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,"

That which was written about Abraham was not written only for Abraham's but also for our sake. This means that as Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness, so also our faith will be accounted to us for righteousness; as Abraham was justified by faith, we also will be justified by faith. The Books of the Old Testaments should not be mere books of history of God's people in the past, but also should be taken as books of teachings containing examples and types of holy people whose steps we try to follow and be guided with. One of these types is the story of Abraham, of which we learn that God justifies by faith, and how Abraham's faith is revealed in his trust in God's promises. Likewise our justifications will be realized by our faith. But what is the type of such faith that justifies us?

It is noteworthy that the words of Paul the apostle about faith do not focus on the resurrection, but on God's work in raising Christ from the dead. The apostle Paul introduces a comparison between God's act in giving Isaac as offspring and God's act in raising Christ. The similarity is evident between the two acts. In the first (Isaac's birth) was the beginning of the history of salvation of mankind, while the second (raising Christ) was the fulfillment of this salvation. Abraham's faith concerned something that was going to happen in the future, but our faith concerns something that has already been fulfilled. Abraham believed in the promise, as a kind of hope, but our faith is on something already realized. Abraham believed in Christ who was to come, but we believe in Christ who has come. Abraham believed in God's power to give him Isaac from the deadness of Sarah's womb, while we are called to believe in this same

power, but as working for a more sublime and serious act, i.e., raising Christ from the dead. Faith in raising Isaac (Heb 11:19) was a prototype, but raising Christ was an actual deed. The subject of our faith is not merely that God is able to raise from the dead, but that God has already and actually raised Christ from the dead.

"who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."

In this verse, the apostle Paul summarizes the mystery of salvation connected with Christ Jesus and clarifies the reason for which He made the basis for justification is faith in the Risen Christ. Christ was given "for our sins", as Isaiah the prophet says, "Surely He has borne our grief and carried our sorrow; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed ... the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all ... He pours out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isa 53: 4-12; see also Rom 8: 32; Gal 2: 20) And in his Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul says, "Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." (Eph 5: 2) So the Lord Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the people to be atonement for our sins and to fulfill the requirements of the Divine Justice. And in Christ's resurrection also our spiritual resurrection has been realized, for we have been justified from our sins. Christ arose so that we may believe, and by this belief in His resurrection we may attain justification.

Furthermore, the resurrection of the Lord Christ means that His atoning mediation has been accepted and the Father was pleased with the sacrifice on the cross. This affirms that the debt of sin has been paid off, and therefore we obtained justification.

=====+=====

Chapter (5)
The Sufficiency of Faith for Justification
(Rom 5: 1-21)

Peace for the Righteous by Faith

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. and not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord

Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."
(Rom 5: 1-11)

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"

By faith, as the apostle said before, we were justified. And by this justification by faith we obtained peace, for peace is the fruit of the life of justification through faith in Him. This means that this peace had not been realized before our justification by faith, but now it has been realized by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sin has set a wall of enmity between man and God. It did not only bring us away from God, but it also removed away the peace which existed between us and God and replaced it with enmity. God in His holiness and perfection cannot enter into a peace relationship with the guilty condemned man. But since the guilt has been removed away and the condemnation ended by justification, there has become room for peace between the Creator and the creation. Moreover, peace is not confined to mere removing away the wall of enmity, but extends to a relationship of strong love by God to man. Man enters into a positive relationship with God reflecting God's love to him. So, when Abraham was justified by faith he was called "the friend of God" (Jas 2: 22). And the Lord Christ spoke to His disciples, saying, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you." (Jn 15: 15) The source of peace, as the apostle Paul mentioned, is the Lord Jesus, for he speaks in other parts of his Epistle about the Lord Christ as the source of peace: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity" (Eph 2: 13, 14); "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight." (Col 1: 21, 22)

"through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

It was not possible that peace be realized for us, as mentioned before, except by the intervention of the Lord Jesus as an Intercessor between God and Man. The purpose of the Lord Christ's atoning work was to bring us near to God after having been far from Him, so through Christ "we have access by faith into this grace". By Christ then we obtained the ability to be near to God.

The words, "we have access by faith ..." mean that we were not born in a state of grace, because we were the sons of wrath. Christ led us to the life of grace as a blind unable to see the road or a lame unable to walk is led. Faith in Christ led us in the life of grace, for peace is nothing but to stay in the life of grace which removed away from us the state of enmity.

The Lord Christ does not only give us peace, but He also protects it that it may continue and that we may not return to the evil which brings back the former enmity between man and God. in other words, the Lord Christ gives us power to "stay" in the state of grace into which He brought us. This the apostle expresses by the words, "into this grace in which we stand". Christ keeps us from falling and from negligence or

return to evil. He gives us the power to keep our spiritual standing which we gained and the victory we have won, and even to advance unceasingly and without hesitation, as the apostle says in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him." (Eph 3: 12)

This transmission which the Lord Christ fulfilled for us from the state of enmity to the state of peace, and from the state of wrath to the state of grace is reflected in our feelings. It transfers us from the state of fear and confusion to a state of confidence and boasting. Terror will no more overwhelm us, but we now pride ourselves in the state of peace and grace in which we stand now. We also take pride in the glory we await for, which God will grant those who love Him in heaven. In the state of grace we no more fear God's wrath, but rather boast and wait in trust for God's glory. This glory which God will grant to the holy people is represented in seeing God and enjoying His presence.

"and not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;"

The peace obtained by the believer is not decreased nor conflicts with the tribulations faced, for we "glory in tribulations". Suffering and tribulations are the characteristics of the Christian person: "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Phil 1: 29) That is why a believer accepts tribulations with pleasure, and they do not have bad effect on him or on his steadfastness and holding fast to faith. The apostle Paul says in this context: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted

as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom 8: 35-38) The apostle also says, "Even to the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure it; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the off scouring of all things until now." (1 Cor 4: 11-13) And in his Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle speaks in detail about the tribulations of the believer in contrast with the comforts granted by the Lord, calling Him "the God of all comfort", "who comforts us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective fro enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer ... because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life ..." (2 Cor 1: 3-8) In the same Epistle the apostle speaks about the afflictions which he himself faced and suffered, saying, "in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often." (2 Cor 11: 23)

Tribulations actually give space to training a believer in perseverance, which gradually creates within the believer a stable virtue of patience and forbearance. Perseverance or patience is not a passive virtue, for it is not mere enduring of hardships faced, but is rather a positive virtue, for it is unique struggling to resist evil and sin. Therefore

the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews says, "let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross ... For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin." (Heb 12: 1-4)

"and perseverance, character; and character, hope."

One of the benefits of perseverance is that it creates "character". But what does this word mean? The Greek word is "dokimy", which means "experiencing" or "evidence based on experience". This is explained in the same Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle says, "... that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality." (2 Cor 8: 2) So the word "character" refers to the state, the readiness, or the tendency resulting from what a person has experienced and preferred. It is the commended character or the fruit of preferring, satisfaction, consent, and pleasure, as the apostle says, "For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things." (2 Cor 2: 9) The same word also is used to mean evidence, proof, witness, as in: "... since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me." (i.e. that Christ is speaking on my mouth) (2 Cor 13: 3)

With the same meaning the verb "dokimazw" was used to mean "prove through testing, experiencing, trial, or examining, as in:

- "... that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise,

honor, and glory (i.e. such faith be commended as deserving honor and glory) at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 1: 7)

- "How is it you do not discern this time?" (Lk 12: 56; see also Rom 4: 18; Phil 1: 10)
- "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them." (Lk 14: 19)
- "Be transformed ... that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12: 2)
- "Where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years." (Heb 3: 9)

The word also means commends after testing and examining, or in other words judges as worth praise, deserving, or chosen, as in:

- "Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves." (Rom 14: 22)
- "And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send." (1 Cor 16: 3)
- "And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things." (2 Cor 8: 22)

The word also is used in the meaning "decide after examining" or "discern and recognize".

Briefly speaking, perseverance of patience caused commending the believer as it creates in him virtuous character causing approval and praise based on evidence and proof.

The apostle further mentions a series of virtues ensuing from tribulations, saying that character asserts hope, or that our hope in God is more and more affirmed and established.

"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

This hope does not disappoint, or rather does not fail, because we do not lay our hope in a human being who may deceive us, but rather in God. The truth of our hope has already been realized in the signs we have obtained which prove God's love for us. Among these signs is the pouring out of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a pledge of our eternal hope. This is clear in the following verses:

- "By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." (1 Jn 4: 13)
- "... through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Tit 3: 6)

God's love, which is the subject of our hope, has been given us or poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The word "poured out" in Greek "ekchew", is used with many meanings, like "pour out" (Rom 16: 1-3); "shed" (Matt 26: 28); "spilled" (Acts 1: 18); "made flow" (Matt 9: 17); and "submit to something" (Josh 11). As pertains to the Holy Spirit, the word is used meaning "pour out", as in:

- "And it shall come to pass in the last days," says God, "that I will pour out of My spirit on all flesh ... and on My

menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My spirit."
(Acts 2: 17, 18)

- "This Jesus God has raised up ... Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which we now see and hear." (Acts 2: 32, 33)
- The Holy Spirit, like water, is poured on the faithful (Tit 3: 6)

And in the Gospel of John the Holy Spirit is likened to the living water:

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his hear will flow rivers of living water." (Jn 7: 38) The same meaning is found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle Paul says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." (1 Cor 12: 13) So, the Holy Spirit is called "the Living Water" because He is the cause of the spiritual life which pours out of Him in the form of living water. The Holy Spirit also washes the souls from their filthiness and grants them to yield the fruit of good deeds.

"By the Holy Spirit who was given to us": The giving of the Holy Spirit by God to the faithful is one of the greatest promises of the New Testament. This is mentioned in the prophecy of Malachi the prophet as referred it in the Book of Acts when speaking about the descending of the Holy Spirit on the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 16-19).

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Actually God's love for us is a unique and incomparable type of love, because though we had been spiritually weak and unable to do any

good thing or to save ourselves from God's wrath, the Lord Christ in due time appointed by God died to save us, the ungodly, and to remove away the yoke of sin and its punishment.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

It is not easy that anybody dies for an ungodly person because scarcely one may die for a good person. This reveals God's deep love for us in that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Moreover, the whole mankind, at the time when Christ died for them, were not merely in a state of sin, but also bearing the spirit of enmity against God (Rom 8: 6).

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

We are now in a better situation than before, for we are now justified by the blood of Christ shed on the cross. So we much more wait to be saved from the coming wrath. The apostle says in his First Epistle to Thessalonians, "... how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess 1: 9, 10) "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess 5: 9)

"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

If when we were still enemies reconciliation were realized between us and God and we became near to Him and enmity was removed away, so being in such a state of peace and reconciliation we are much more near to being saved by Christ. And if we have been already saved by His death while yet in that state of enmity, so now it is more near for us in such a state of peace and reconciliation by His life, we no more need Christ to die once more, but even more, He lives in glory in heaven interceding for us. In this context Paul the apostle in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5: 18) And in his Epistle to the Colossians, the apostle says, "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight." (Col 1: 19-22)

This means that what the sacrifices of the Old Testament could not realize, that has been realized by the sacrifice of Christ, which God was pleased with as atonement for the sins of mankind, "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens, who does not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." (Heb 7: 25-27)

"And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

Not only have we obtained salvation, but we also pride ourselves in the glory which we will obtain. We did not only come to heaven, but we also will be crowned with glory and triumph. We do not boast of ourselves before God, but of God's mercy and love. The Lord Christ is the cause of pride, for through Him our reconciliation to God has been accomplished, and without Him, salvation would not have been achieved.

Death in Adam and Salvation in Christ

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (for until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also

by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 5: 12-22)

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."

The apostle Paul refers to the one man who sinned and through him sin entered into all mankind, and death with it. So death reigned over all people, because in Adam all his offspring have sinned. The apostle here ascribes sin to Adam, not to Eve, because it was Adam who received the commandment, being the head not only of his own gender, but of Eve as well. Here also Paul the apostle personifies sin, speaking about it as a person opening the door of the world and entering into it. God did not create sin, for when God finished creating the world, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." (Gen 1: 31) Sin was not then existent in the world. It only entered the world when Adam disobeyed God's command and ate of the forbidden tree.

As Adam by his sin became a sinner and mortal, therefore mankind inherited these two qualities, and all human beings became subject to the condemnation of sin and death.

There is a general law adopted by all countries: that the deeds of a person who is a public person, are imputed to those whom that person represents. All people act through the person who represents them. The same applies to Adam. Adam sinned as a representative of the whole

mankind, because all were to descend from him. Therefore the judgment against Adam as sinner and the sentence of death are shared by all mankind, because they act through their representative. So, through the sin of Adam all the human nature became defiled and every human being bears by nature the sin of Adam the head of mankind¹. This is evident in the following verses:

- "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen 6: 5)
- "The Lord said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.'" (Gen 8: 21)
- "for there is no man who does not sin" (1 Kgs 8: 46)
- "There is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. they have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one." (Ps 14: 1-3)
- "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous." (Ps 143: 2)
- "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity." (Isa 59: 3, 4)

¹ Khristos Androtsos, the Creed of the Eastern Orthodox Church (in Greek), 2nd edition, Athens, 1907, p. 145-146

- "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin'?" (Prov 20: 9)
- "For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin." (Eccl 7: 20)
- "But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." (Gal 3: 22)
- "As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.'" (Rom 3: 10-17)
- "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 Jn 1: 8)
- "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one." (Job 14: 4)
- "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." (Ps 51: 5)
- "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Jn 3: 5, 6)
- "among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Eph 2: 3)

The text in Greek discerns between the verb "eisylthe" meaning "entered", and the verb "diylthen" meaning spread. The verb "entered" refers to the death of sin which befell man for the first time. While the verb "spread" refers to that death which became no more for the first time, but was transmitted to all the grandchildren, i.e., the descendants of Adam like a disease which enters a city for the first time, then spreads to all the inhabitants of that city.

In the text of the verse, the apostle says, "because all sinned" (ephw) meaning that death befell all people, because all sinned in the person of Adam the sinner. Also all died in the death of Christ for their salvation.

In this context Hegumen Michael Mina in his book "Theology", first volume, says:

[Adam did not obey the commandment, and was deceived by the devil and ate from the forbidden tree disregarding the divine command. By this he brought death upon himself and upon all his offspring descending from him, because they were in his loins. He was their representative, therefore sin devolved to them as inheritance. We were born from him as sinners and partners of his sin. This is not because each one of us has done this sin by his own will, but because that ancestor did it by his sole will. God has set Adam as a public character, with the will of all mankind contained in his will. It is true that we were not existent at that time, but we were in him, because God had set him a head for us and a representative of us. That is why his act was not a private one, but was an act of a "kinsman" of all the family, and therefore shall be ascribed to all of them although they did not take part in it. No wonder then that the creator connects the will of all mankind with the will of their father whom

He set as "kinsman", so that whatever he willed, that they themselves willed. There is no room for the objection of some people who say that Adam's representation of his descendants is invalid, because they had not chosen him as their representative, because as the guardian is set without being chosen by the person under guardianship, and the father is entitled to choose a guardian for his son, so also God has the right to choose a representative for human beings. Certainly there was no way for asking forgiveness for such a sin by the creation, because this sin has cause infinite evil, being addressed against God whose majesty is Infinite. Therefore none of the creation, whether men or angels could atone for this crime, because their deeds are by nature finite or limited, whereas the sin is considered an infinite act compared to God's nature. Thereupon, the divine wisdom arranged for this wonderful means by which man could be saved and at the same time the divine justice be satisfied. This means is promoting man's nature to a superior state and a divine rank, through sharing God's nature so that this nature can atone for that transgression and satisfy the divine justice, since its act would be produced by an equal. Such a means could not be attained except by the incarnation of the Son of God and the deification of the human nature, without which no reconciliation could be accomplished between God and man, for who is the person who can mediate between God and man unless he be of such honor equal to God Himself?] (p. 308-311)

We shall talk in more detail on "The Original Sin" through our theological studies in the New Testament.¹

¹ See our book: *"The Original Sin and the Personal Sins"*. St. John the Beloved Publishing House, 1994 & our book: *"The Theological Thought of Paul the Apostle"*, Antoun Publishing House, 2005

(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.)

The apostle brings as evidence of the spreading of sin to all mankind since Adam that all people became subject to the sentence of death as punishment for sin. So sin did not only exist since the era of Moses' law, but had existed before that since the days of Adam. "Sin was in the world". Before God gave Moses' law, sin had been there, because there had been death. However, sin is not imputed nor judged since there is no law, the violation and disobedience and transgression of which represent sin. In other words, sin is not imputed as transgression or violation or breaking or disobedience so long as there is no law, for law is the criteria for such actions and judgment thereof.

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."

There are many evidences that sin has existed in the world since Adam. Among these evidences the crime of Cain against his brother Abel, and the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole world in the days of Noah. However, the most important evidence introduced by Paul the apostle is the "death" which spread to all mankind and everybody became subject to without exception, although Adam's descendants did not sin in the same way which Adam sinned, i.e., disobeying God's commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was the type of Christ who was to come after the first Adam.

"But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many."

The harm caused by Adam's sin did not attain to the benefits we obtained through the grace of Christ. Sin cannot be compared to the grace given us from God, nor to the gift given us through the one Man Jesus Christ, because the flow of grace and the flow of justification are deeper and wider than the course of judgment. The flow of grace does not only save us from one sin or from the results of the sin on one man (Adam's sin), but it extends to all sins and all other types of disobedience. Forgiveness covers all sins that mankind may be exposed to. So the grace or the gift differ from the sin of the one man Adam, in that the condemnation in that case was for Adam's sin and the judgment spread to all people, whereas the act of Christ or the act of God represented in the Redemption dispensation extended to forgive the many sins of mankind. That is to say, the advantage of the gift or the grace has given forgiveness of the sins of all members of mankind for all types of sin. Therefore Paul the apostle in his Epistle to the Colossians says, "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col 2: 13) This means that the act of salvation is much more powerful than the perdition caused by sin. Christ had to conquer the sting of death and destroy the power of sin, "O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor 15: 55) Adam's one sin yielded many sins to innumerable persons therefore the power of salvation through Christ Jesus needed to be not only equal to the power of sin through Adam, but to be more powerful and stronger and far reaching.

There are some words included in this verse which need further explanation; these are:

Sin (paraptwma)

Gift (charisma)

Grace (charis)

Grant (dwrea)

- **Sin**: By sin is meant a wrongdoing. It can be parallel to the word "Parabasis", which means "violation, breach, infringement, stray, transgression, stray", and give the meaning of sin as "hamartia" which denote transgression or disobedience to a certain commandment causing condemnation. However there can be distinction between it and the word "hamartia" in that the latter refers to the wrong intention, whereas the word "paraptwma" refers to a certain wrongdoing.

- **Gift (charisma)**: This word means:

- Free gift (Rom 5: 15, 16: 23; 2 Cor 1: 11)
- Benefit or interest (Rom 1: 11)
- Gifts, or awards and divine graces (1 Cor 12: 4, 9, 18, 30)

- **Grace** (charis): A word which means:

- A favor or something that deserves thanks (1 Pet 2: 9)
- A commended thing (1 Pet 2: 20)
- Heavenly, divine (Lk 4: 22)
- Benefit, interest (2 Cor 1: 15; Eph 4: 29)
- Generous gift, benefaction, charitable deed (1 Cor 16: 3; 2 Cor 8: 4, 6)
- Favor (Acts 25: 3)
- Acceptance, satisfaction (Lk 1: 30)
- Free gift (Jn 1: 14, 16, 17; Rom 4: 4; Eph 2: 5) (1 Pet 3: 7)
- Free gift, especially offered by God to man (Acts 15: 11)

- **Grant** (dwrea): Means "free gift" (Gal 2: 21), for no reason (Jn 15: 25)

"And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification."

It is said concerning Adam: "through the sin of one man", and concerning Christ: "through the righteousness of the One".

Again it is said concerning Adam: "by the disobedience of the one man", and concerning Christ: "by the obedience of the One".

Concerning Adam: "for the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation", and concerning Christ: "the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification". (This means that Christ justifies us not only from the sin of Adam, but from all other sins). Therefore the apostle Paul holds a comparison between the consequences of Adam's sins and those of Christ's saving act.

Then Paul the apostle speaks further about the advantages of the grace, which surpass the harm resulting from sin. He says:

"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

The apostle did not only say that death reigned, but also says that the righteous will reign. And in verse (21) of the same chapter, the apostle speaks about sin reigning in death, and grace reigning to life. When sin reigns, it leads to death, and death reigns through sin, and through the reign of sin and of death, Satan reigns.

On the other hand, with the reign of Christ, Satan is conquered and destroyed, and the result is that the righteous reign through Christ Jesus.

In this context, the apostle Paul asserts the great and far reaching results of justification. For if by the fall of one, Adam, death prevailed through this one man, how much more will those who receive the blessings of grace and justification as a gift will reign in a new heavenly life through our Lord Jesus Christ. In the sin of Adam all mankind sinned, and in the grace salvation has been granted to all mankind from all sins, not only from Adam's sin. The consequences of grace surpassed greatly the consequences of Adam's sin, and rather more we became in a better situation than before. This is similar to what happened to Joseph, for he was not only freed from the fetters of prison, but became in a better and more sublime than that which he had been in before. For Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, 'Bow the knee!' So he set him over all the land of Egypt." (Gen 41: 41- 44) Also we, through Christ, have become kings and priests. What we lost by Adam's sin is not equal to what we gained through the righteousness of Christ and the gift of grace.

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life."

As mankind suffered condemnation through the inherited sin of Adam, so also through the righteous life of one man, that is, Christ, who gives justification, all people enjoy the state of righteousness giving life,

meaning saves us from death. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians Paul the apostle says, "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." (1 Cor 15: 21, 22) And the Lord Christ says in the Gospel of St. John, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." (Jn 12: 31, 32) Paul the apostle likewise says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." Heb 2: 9)

The words "justification of life," mean the righteousness which gives spiritual life through the grace of the Holy Spirit. This life also includes the resurrection of the bodies from death in future, and this is considered crowning and perfection of the spiritual life in the present world.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."

Exactly as by Adam's disobedience his descendants became sinners and guilty, so also by the obedience shown by the One Man Jesus Christ, represented in offering Himself on the cross unto death "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2: 8), by this obedience those who believe will be made righteous. As Isaiah the prophet says, "By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." (Isa 53: 11)

It is worth noting that the verb "were made" in Greek is "katestathy", which is in the past tense passive voice of the present verb "kathistymi". This verb in the modern Greek "eginanamartwloi" which is translated "became (sinners)" and in English "were made (sinners)", while in French "ont e rendus pecheurs" meaning "all have become with Adam's sins, sinners by nature, or inherited the sinful nature". It is also to be noted that the apostle Paul, speaking about justification, did not use the verb in the past passive voice as he did for Adam's sin, but he used the verb as in English "shall be made righteous" and in French "serong rendus justes". This means that only those who believe in Christ will receive righteousness.

"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,"

Here a question is raised: If people were to be justified through Jesus, what need was there for the law? The apostle Paul indicates that the law was given for a limited time. When it came sin abounded due to the fall of Adam, and people abounded more in sin, because they disobeyed the law and violated the commandments. But as sin abounded, grace also abounded much more "the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant" (1 Tim 1: 14).

The law was given for a limited time to prepare for the covenant of the grace, because the law was not a goal in itself, but Christ was "the end of the law". The fault of the Jews was their belief that the law was able to give them salvation and justification, and this made them reject Christianity. Actually Moses' law was only given to prepare the hearts for faith in Christ. And if Moses' law was linked with the abounding of sin, this did not mean that the law was the cause of sin or the abounding of

sin. Rather the law was like a mirror that revealed the sins of mankind and exposed them, because sin would not have been imputed if there had been no law. The law revealed the abundance of sins committed by people, as the Lord Christ says, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." (Jn 15: 22) Paul the apostle likewise says, "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3: 20); "because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law, there is no transgression" (Rom 4: 15); "But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead." (Rom 7: 8) Nevertheless, the abundance of sins also revealed the abounding of grace or the abounding of the work of grace in the forgiveness of the many sins.

"so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So, as sin reigned and prevailed over mankind and its reign and power appeared in the ensuing death, for the reign of death is the reign of sin, so also grace reigns through justification to life, because the reign of righteousness or justification is the reign of the grace unto eternal life. The apostle Paul also says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6: 23)

=====+=====

Chapter (6)
The Results of Justification by Faith
(Rom 6: 1-8: 39)

1. The justified do not walk in sin

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that he died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." (Rom 6: 1-13)

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"

In the last verses of the preceding chapter the apostle stated that the abounding of sin was accompanied by abounding of grace. Shall we then think that we ought to live and continue in sin so that grace would be given us in abundance?! The apostle asserts the close connection between the grace (the righteousness) and holiness. Both are only attained through Christ Jesus. In Chapter (5) he says that justification cannot be attained except through Christ Jesus (5: 11, 17, 21), and in Chapter (6) the apostle mentions that holiness is only attained through Christ Jesus. So there is no essential connection between sin and grace.

"Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

The apostle disapproves continuing in sin so that grace may abound, for this besides being a kind of deception and misleading it encourages sinking in evil and committing immoral acts. The apostle used the words "died to sin" to indicate that those justified by the blood of Christ have cut all relationship or connection with sin. There have become no more any relationship whatsoever between the believer and the life of sin. As Peter the apostle in his First Epistle says, "For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." (1 Pet 1: 4) And the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians says, "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him ..." (Col 3: 8-17)

So, in the life of justification or righteousness ceasing of sin and refrain from doing evil and moving to a different context with no desire to go back again. It is a irrevocable transfer that know no hesitation.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

The apostle speaks about the importance of baptism for building our spiritual life, for it is the means of salvation by which we have obtained the life of justification and was death to sin was realized. Those who got baptized in the name of Christ Jesus have united with Christ and became through baptism taking part in the cross of his death. Our old man, the sinful man died as Christ was crucified and died. So, through baptism we were buried with Christ, for baptism made us take part in his death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead, we also might rise to a new virtuous life and walk in conformity with this new life. Through baptism we put off the old garments and put on Christ "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal 3: 27) And Peter the apostle says, "There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 3: 21) In baptism then a kind of uniting with Christ is realized: uniting with Him in His death, and also uniting with Him in His resurrection.

Notice the following phrases:

- "As many as were baptized into Christ": This phrase refers to uniting with Christ, to the relationship of the baptized with Christ, for the baptized puts on Christ.
- "We were baptized into His death": This means that the baptized dies with Christ. Baptism establishes us in a relationship with the death of Christ, makes us partners in the death of Christ. Baptism for us becomes the cross of Christ and the tomb of Christ, where we bury sin. In Baptism we share Christ His death so that we may share with Him the blessings resulting from this death. If Christ was crucified and died to do away with the authority of sin and to rise in triumph breaking the sting of Satan, then by baptism we die to sin and cut all relationship with it, looking forward to a glorious victorious life in righteousness and holiness. Descending into water or immersion in water represents burial in the tomb. Those who are buried have no more relation with the world. So also those who are baptized stop any relation with sin. Unless the human soul experiences death, burial and resurrection, it will not share the divine spiritual life. This means that the human soul cannot realize its spiritual life except through uniting with Christ Jesus so that through baptism it may attain death, burial and resurrection with Christ. Therefore the events of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection for the believer are not mere historical events that took place to accomplish the divine salvation, but rather they are live facts and personal suffering through baptism.
- "by the glory of the Father": i.e., by the power of the Father
- "even so we also should walk": It means that as Christ was raised from the dead, we also will be raised from the dead to walk in this new virtuous life and direct all our abilities to conform with its requirements.

- "in newness of life": That is in the new life of virtue, triumph and victory over sin. Renewal of life actually is a gift not less than the act of creation and even surpasses it, because it requires first to do away with the old life to give room to the new life. The old elements of the human nature decrease and fall behind completely and their power turns into renewed power supporting the new life. By this man from the outside is the same person, but at the same time he is not the same. The person who was not yet renewed was subject to the authority of the self. His self was his god. but after renewal his self united with the Person of Christ, and his human self became with Christ a united self. Man's life becomes the life of Christ in him, and his love and worship of his own self change into love and worship of Christ. In this way, man experiences a new type of life that is not linked with his old previous life. This new life is the fruit of the renewal of the human self through uniting with Christ, and the fruit of renewal of the human heart which is the source of the spiritual and moral life. So, if the new life is the fruit of the unity between the human self and Christ, or the fruit of the act of Christ in the human self, then it will be natural to believe that away from faith in Christ and without uniting with Christ in baptism, man cannot at all attain virtue in its genuine meaning.

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,"

In this verse the apostle affirms that which the faithful obtain in the new life. The faithful rise from the life of sin into a new spiritual life, since they have become one with Christ through uniting with Him in baptism which is a type of His death. As a natural result they become one with Him in His resurrection. In other words, if the faithful have become

one with Christ in His death through the baptism which is the likeness of His death, they also will be one with the Risen Christ. In baptism then a kind of unity is realized with Christ: unity with Him in His death, and unity with Him in His resurrection, "that I many know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death." (Phil 3: 10) In baptism death to the former corrupt conduct is realized, and walking in righteousness and true holiness takes place, as the apostle Paul says in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph 4: 22-24)

We notice in the verse subject of our talk that the word "united" is the translation of the Greek word "sumphutoi" derived from the verb "sumphuw", which means "grow with". So the meaning will be the growth of trees or plants together as used in the Gospel of St. Luke where we read about the seeds that "thorns sprang up with it". So, it is as if the apostle says that we have become one with Christ as the trees grow together, and metaphorically the word refers to uniting with Christ.

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

We will become one with Christ in His resurrection. But we have to be aware that the nature which has been defiled with sin inherited from Adam must first be crucified with Christ mystically in the baptism. This is in order that the body which has been slave of sin might die with us, and we become no longer a tool to sin and slaves to it.

The word "knowing" refers to the human moral factor for realizing the renewal of life. Our sharing the resurrection of Christ is not fulfilled as a natural and necessary act, but it needs struggling and seeking from our part. So, there is a moral condition on which our right to have fellowship of Christ resurrection is based.

By "the old man" is meant the sinful man who is subject to the authority of sin, compared to the new man who has obtained renewal of life in Christ Jesus.

Paul the apostle says:

- "Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace." (Eph 2: 15)
- "That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lust." (Eph 4: 22)
- "And that you put on the new man which was according to God, in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph 4: 24)
- "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." (Col 3: 9, 10)

The words "was crucified" mean "crucified with Christ in baptism, morally".

In the words "that the body of sin might be done away with", the phrase "be done away with" is in Greek "katargythy", derived from the

verb "katargw", which came is used in the New Testament with the following meanings:

- a) Renders something un-useful or unfruitful, has no use, or has occupied a space for no avail, as in "Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit in this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?'" (Lk 13: 7)
- b) Renders something with no significance of avail, as in "For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of no effect." (Rom 4: 14)
- c) Renders something invalid, or abolishes or cancels it, as in "Do we then make void the law through faith?" (Rom 3: 31; Eph 2: 15)
- d) Come to an end, "However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing." (1 Cor 2: 6)
- e) Destroy, do away with, perish, or vanish, "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming." (2 Thess 2: 8; Heb 2: 14)
- f) Released from, "If the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband." (Rom 7: 2; Rom 7: 7; Lev 5: 4)
- g) Renders something with no power, "Our old man was crucified with Him, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Rom 6: 6)

So, the words, "that the body of sin might be done away with" mean that the body of sin becomes with no power regarding sin, or loses

its power and becomes like a dead motionless body with no desires or lusts or like an inanimate thing that is still regarding sin.

As for the words "body of sin" they mean the body which has become a tool for sin. Nevertheless the body itself has no connection with sin; it does not correspond to sin. So, the words "body of sin" is synonymous with "the old man". Also the meaning here does not denote the body as a material, but the whole man who is subject to the authority of sin with his body, mind, soul, and spirit.

"For he who has died has been freed from sin."

Paul the apostle warns us against returning once more to the sinfulness in which we had been before. In baptism, we have taken a body free from sin, but before baptism we had the body of sin. In other words, before baptism, in our old body, we used to do sin and long to do it and live in it and be connected with it. But in baptism the body of sin was replaced with a body free from sin, which has no relationship whatsoever with it and cannot do sin, because this body has died to sin, unless a person wants his body to return to its former state, i.e. slavery to sin. The body which we received in baptism has acquired a nature which abhors sin, has no power to commit sin, unless we want once more to have our nature to return to its former state. The apostle gives us here a glorious image of the victorious and triumphant life of righteousness, the life which is not defiled with sin and which has cut all relationship with it. Indeed the nature of the luminous and spiritual body will emit light, only if we do not return with our nature to its former state.

The words "has been freed from sin" mean is released from sin, is released from the punishment of sin and from guilt, and for the future is released from the authority and dominion of sin. The apostle Paul says:

- "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." (1 Pet 4: 1, 2)
- "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Col 3: 1-5)
- "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal 5: 24)

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him"

This means that we no longer live in the state of death which we had been in. We have died through baptism to sin, and we now live with Christ the life of grace and we share a blessed everlasting life. This future everlasting life is the subject of our faith now.

"knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that he

died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."

In the preceding verse the apostle referred to our faith in everlasting life, and in this verse he explains the reason for such faith. We are sure of resurrection and of everlasting life, because we believe that Christ arose from the dead, and He will not die once more. Death will have no power over Christ afterward, because He died once for all and forever to do away with the power of sin. This life which He now lives resurrected from the dead, He lives for the glory of God.

Notice here:

1. Our faith may be based on our knowledge of a certain event that had happened actually. We believe that we will rise from the dead, because Christ Himself has risen from the dead. The historical events may be evidence for the issues of faith, and knowledge of these events can be our way to faith.
2. The resurrection has opened forever the gates of life before Christ, and death would not prevail over Him once more. Here the Lord Christ differs from human beings who rose from the dead, because death prevailed over them again. When Christ rose from the dead He left the burial cloth in the tomb, whereas when Lazarus rose from the dead he came out with his burial cloth because he was to die again, and so that the death which he was certainly going to suffer might not escape his eyes.
3. As the Lord Christ came out of the tomb and will not return to it again, we likewise have to come out of the tomb of sin and never return to it again, but cut all relation with the deeds of darkness. We should leave it and never keep them with us,

exactly as the Lord Christ left the burial cloth in the tomb and did not keep it with Him.

4. The words "lives to God" mean that the life of Christ after the resurrection is for glorifying God.

The Lord Christ says in the Gospel of John:

"Father, the hour has come ... that Your Son also may glorify You ... that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do ... I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world." (Jn 17: 1-6)

So, glorifying God is done when the Lord Christ grants the souls of people God's holy life. While sin had been prevailing and dominating, and souls had been drowning in its waters and ignoring glorifying God, the situation changed by the resurrection of the Lord Christ. This is because He granted these souls the freedom from the power of sin and gave them life of righteousness and holiness. By this it became possible that the souls of me be dedicated to serving and glorifying God, and that their whole life be God's life.

"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

As Christ lives to God, the faithful also should consider themselves dead to sin, and have no more any relation with it. They now live to God, united with Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore the apostle draws our attention that we now live after the resurrection of Christ a new life which

is different from the former life which we had been leading before receiving the blessings of the redemption. A Christian therefore should take into consideration such separation between his former life and the new life acquired in Christ. Paul the apostle says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "He died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor 5: 15, 17) And the apostle Peter says, "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness." (1 Pet 2: 24)

The words, "alive to God" mean alive for God's sake, because we follow Him completely and has the strong desire to be linked to Him and to be found in fellowship with Him and seek Him as the sublime good. We seek to glorify Him with our power and our abilities.

"In Christ Jesus our Lord" means that we live united with Christ Jesus in whom the divine nature and the human nature are united, God with man. In uniting with Christ God's life is fulfilled in us, as the apostle Paul says, "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin." (Rom 8: 10) Christ is our spiritual life. We cannot live to God except through which ensures for us life with God.

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."

The apostle warns us not to let sin dominate over our body to become dead with sin. We should not let the body and its lusts dominate over our immortal souls. We should not submit to sin or obey it and be attracted to the lusts of this body. That is why God warned Cain not to

submit to sin, saying to him, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." (Gen 4: 7) A believer should keep himself from sin (Ps 19: 13); "Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me." (Ps 119: 133)

Notice the meaning of the following phrases:

"Do not let sin reign": This means that sin may reign and dominate. It is a strong enemy, however, a believer has the power in Christ Jesus to face and resist it and not allow it to reign or dominate over him. However strong sin may be, a believer can keep himself against it, and dominate and prevail over it.

"In its lusts": Lusts are like an inflammable substance, and sin is like the fire that inflames it.

"And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

You do not have to present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, so that sin might not fight you and triumph over you by means of these members. So, we should be aware not to let any of our fleshly senses or spiritual attributes to submit to the authority of sin. The apostle is not only satisfied with warning us against falling in sin, but also adds a positive requirement in our spiritual life. The believers are required not only to stop doing evil, but also to present themselves completely as offering dedicated to God. They do so as people who attained to the spiritual resurrection in baptism and received new holy life. The apostle commands the believers to offer all members of their

bodies to God as instruments of virtue that may be able to conquer all sin. If we apply the teaching of the apostle to our life, we will see ourselves as a space revealing spiritual virtues and fulfilling them. Each member of the body and each attribute of the spirit should be presented to God and used to reveal His glory through practicing virtuous works. The apostle Paul therefore says:

- "I beseech therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom 12: 1)
- "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death." (Rom 7: 5)
- "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these" anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." (Col 3: 5-8)

And the apostle James says, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (Jas 4: 1)

Peter the apostle likewise says, "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness." (1 Pet 2: 24) "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." (1 Pet 4: 2)

See the meaning of the following phrases:

Do not present your members: To present something is to make it in the service of something else. So the apostle means that we should not make our members in the service of sin. The verb "present" is in the present tense implying continuity in the present and in future. We also notice that the word "members" is in the plural to denote the various lusts, each attempt to use the member fit for it.

Instruments of unrighteousness: means instruments used in sin. The Greek word used here is "opal" which means "weapons", because the believer is in a state of struggling and warring, resisting and rejection of sin.

As being alive from the dead: Man was dead by sin, but now he became alive in righteousness.

Instruments of righteousness: i.e. practicing virtue by the members of the body. This means that the body itself is not evil, because it can be used for righteousness.

2. The Justified Bear Holy Fruit

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were

delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6: 14-23)

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

The faithful can attain this level of spiritual life, presenting their members as instrument to God. This is because sin no longer dominates over them nor reigns over them. They are no longer under the authority of the law, which role was confined to discern between good and evil, or between righteousness and sin, without giving power to attain a life of righteousness. Now they have become members of the state of grace; their former sins forgiven, and are now able to walk safely in the way of holiness and virtue. The apostle John says, "Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him." (1 Jn 3: 6) "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (Jn 1: 17) And Paul the apostle says, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." (Gal 5: 18) "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God." (Rom 7: 4) "But now we

have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom 7: 6) "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom 8: 2)

Now notice the following words:

But under grace: What was difficult to realize "under the law", that can be realized now "under grace", because the person of grace does not face sin with his own nature but with the help of the Holy Spirit who works within him with His grace. Sin may fight a believer and cause him some troubles and disturbances, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit sin will not be able to prevail or dominate over the believer.

You are not under the law: The law warns against sin and exposes it and abhors it, but does not give power to conquer it.

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!"

The question which the apostle Paul had raised at the beginning of Chapter (6) is repeated here similarly. He asks whether the life of grace is linked with sin or not. In other words, 'Does the grace allow us the right to sin? Does it conform with the life of grace that we return to the state of sin in which we had been before, and if this happened, shall we then under the authority of the grace? Can the tree of grace yield sin as fruit? ' The apostle rejects the idea that there is a link between the life of justification and the life of sin, for these are two contradicting levels of life which cannot meet. Sin and grace cannot reign together nor yield the same fruit, for sin brings death, but grace brings everlasting life. The work of grace as indicated by the apostle Paul in verses 16, 17 of the same Chapter changes slavery to sin into slavery to righteousness.

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"

Do you not know that you become slaves to that which you present yourselves and you live in obedience; you become slave to that which you obey. In other words, either "slaves to sin" that leads to spiritual death and complete separation from God, or "slaved to Christ" which obedience leads to the life of righteousness and blessedness. A person cannot gather between slavery to sin and slavery to righteousness at the same time. The Lord Christ says, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other." (Matt 6: 24) Paul the apostle in the preceding verse refused the idea of any link between sin and the life of grace, and based his refusal on a logical basis, that these two levels of life, as said before, are contradictory and cannot meet together. Then in the present verse the apostle gives a psychological solution to the problem, that our obedience to a certain matter and getting used to such obedience makes us slaves to that matter. Therefore, we have to choose between obedience to sin and obedience to righteousness, or between slavery to sin and slavery to righteousness. Slavery to sin ends with our spiritual death, whereas slavery to Christ ends with our spiritual triumph and conquering evil.

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered."

The apostle Paul gives thanks to God, because the believers who had been slaves to sin, now obey with all their hearts and perfectly the rules of the Christian teaching which they had received from the apostles.

This conforms to the commandment which the apostle gave to his disciple Timothy, saying, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." (2 Tim 1: 13)

Notice the meaning of the following phrases:

You obeyed from the heart: This denotes the act coming by one's choice and free will, not by force or involuntarily. It was not imposed upon them from outside, but they obeyed by internal conviction of the heart and mind.

That form of doctrine to which you were delivered: Here the apostle refers to the teachings kept by the Romans, which they received through tradition and handing down. It is a declaration that holding to tradition is the proper thing which should be protected.

"And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

Having been freed from sin, you became connected with virtue. As Peter the apostle says, "That we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness." (1 Pet 2: 24) "As free, yet not using your liberty as a cloak for vice, but as servants of God" (1 Pet 2: 16) And John the apostle says, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn 8: 32) And in the First Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle says, "For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave." (1 Cor 7: 22) "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." (Gal 5: 1)

"I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness."

The apostle Paul discusses the problem on the human level, "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh". He tried to use a style of talk that conforms to and suits the weakness of the human nature (your flesh), which is still a fleshly nature to the extent that they believe that doing virtuous deeds is slavery. The apostle therefore commands the Romans that as they have presented their members to serve sin which defiles man and makes him lawless, i.e., violating the law and doing sin and whatever does not fit the requirements of the law, so also they have now to present their members to serve the virtuous life so that their life may be sanctified. The Lord Christ commanded us to try to cleanse the members of the body, so as not to be deprived of membership of the kingdom. The Lord Christ says, "And if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." (Matt 18: 8, 9)

Because of the weakness of your flesh: This means because of the weakness of your minds and awareness, which make you unable to recognize sufficiently the proper religious teachings.

Slaves of righteousness: Slavery to righteousness is liberty itself, because it frees us from the authority of sin and from submission to evil

lusts. It is because we cannot attain such slavery of righteousness unless we attain first the perfect freedom by which we have full power over ourselves so that doing good may become part of our nature, and our human will unite with God's will. In this case our will submits totally to the divine will, and the utmost desire and pleasure of man becomes complete submission to God's commands and commandments. In this case also man subjects his own will and makes it locked up in the divine will and captive to the heavenly will. Such an angelic state in which one's will becomes established in doing good and in the divine will should be the desire of man and his sublime request. No doubt, in the beginning of our spiritual life we will not have yet attained to such a state of complete and perfect submission to the divine will. This needs hard struggling and deep and strong spiritual training, especially because our corrupt nature attempts always to make this more difficult and such a hope far to attain. Therefore we have to struggle to the last breath to attain this "slavery of righteousness", knowing that the more we commit ourselves to submit and be slaves to righteousness, the more we gain freedom and realize it in our life.

Uncleanness and of lawlessness: This refers to all sins.

Slaves of righteousness for holiness: Those who become slaves of righteousness improve in the life of holiness, whereas those who become slaves of uncleanness fall from bad to worse in the life of sin.

"For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness."

When you were slaves of sin, you freed yourselves from the commitment to the requirements of the law, and did not submit to God's commandments to do good.

"What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death."

The apostle Paul inquires what benefit they have received from the sinful deeds, which when you remember now you feel ashamed. Actually, the apostle says to the Romans, you got nothing useful from such sinful life, but on the contrary you exposed yourselves to big harm, because the final result of sin is death, as God says on the mouth of prophet Ezekiel, "You will remember your ways and be ashamed ... that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done," says the Lord God." The apostle Paul affirms that the end of sinful deeds is death, for he says in another part of the Epistle to the Romans, "For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sins which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death." (Rom 7: 5) And also, "For to be carnally minded is death ... For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (Rom 8: 6, 13)

The word "fruit" is used in the New Testament in the good meaning. And in the Epistle to the Galatians the apostle distinguishes between "the works of the flesh" and "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5: 19, 22). In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul speaks about "the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph 5: 11). Actually in addition to the loss which the sinner will face in future represented in losing the everlasting life, the sinner in the present world does not gain any fruit from the works of darkness.

The apostle Paul also speaks about the shame resulting from committing sin, saying, "the things of which you are now ashamed". For mere remembrance of sin causes shame, how much rather if man has actually committed sin and this resulted in bad consequences. Shame entered into the world with sin, and will continue as a distinguishing sign and as the result of doing sin.

The apostle speaks about death as the end of the evil deeds, saying, "For the end of these things is death". He does not mean the death of the body in the earthly life, but the everlasting death in the coming life, and the death of the spirit represented in its separation from God.

"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."

This means that they have been freed from sin and submitted themselves to God, and this certainly caused them growth and advance in the life of holiness. The final result of such a holy life is everlasting life. We notice here that the apostle distinguishes between "holiness" as a fruit, and "everlasting life" as an end. Holiness therefore is a state implying growth and advancement, for every duty you perform is a step on the way of holiness ending with everlasting life.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Humanity before the advent of the Lord Christ had been in miserable slavery, because the wages of sin it pays to its worshippers is "death", but now God has granted us everlasting life which is realized through our uniting with Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter (7)
The Law and Spiritual Life
(Rom 7: 1-25)

Freed from the Law

"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom 7: 1-6)

"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?"

In this Chapter the apostle goes on speaking about the freedom which God's children enjoy under the grace covenant. In the preceding Chapter he spoke about freedom from the authority of sin, and in this Chapter he speaks about freedom from another authority or dominion, that of the law. Sin and the law then were the two lords to whom humanity submitted in their fall, but in Christ we were set free from sin

(Rom 6: 22), and from the law (Rom 7: 6). And the apostle disapproves that the Jews who know the law to be ignorant of such a matter, for they wanted to keep the authority and dominion of the law. So, in this Chapter the apostle addresses the problem of the dominion of the law.

"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."

Does the law still keep its dominion? The apostle Paul indicates that the dominion of the law over the faithful does no longer exist. He gave as example the woman who is bound by the law to her husband as long as he is alive. She cannot violate the law which organizes her marital relationship with her husband while he is still alive. She cannot marry another man otherwise she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies she will be free from the law which binds her with that husband, and she will be entitled to marry another man, being freed from the former relationship. This means that the law keeps its dominion so long as the man is alive, and loses its dominion when the man dies. The same applies to our relationship with the law.

The law had dominion over us when our falling nature was alive, for the law organized our relationship with this falling nature as it organizes the relationship of a woman with her living husband. Therefore

God's people in the olden times had no right to put away the commitment of the law which organized their relationship in the light of their mortal falling nature. But the situation differed now, for no longer are connected with the falling sinful and mortal nature, nor are bound with the law which organizes our relationship with it. We now are bound with and united to the body of Christ which died on the cross. We now enter into new relations and new connections, but we have died to the law and united with Christ who arose from the dead. We now are united to another, that is, Christ. Our relationship with Christ is like the relationship between the married couple in the marital life, for as a wife is bound to her husband and cannot marry another so long as he is alive, it is the same in this spiritual unity between us and Christ. We have no right to disregard the law of Christ or His teachings and Person and bind ourselves with another, or as the apostle says, "Those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." (2 Cor 5: 15) Moreover, our unity with Christ is eternal, for Christ is alive forever.

"For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

The apostle asserted that the grace covenant brought with it the characteristic of freedom from the law and from the old obligations. At the same time he asserted that the new spiritual unity with Christ is alone capable of providing us with a spiritual virtuous and fruitful life, because when we were in the life of the flesh, the whims and desires of sin worked within our bodily members, encouraged by the acts prohibited by

the law, and it led to death. But now we have been completely freed from the law to which we had been subject and captives, and entered into this new relationship which united us with Christ. We became united with His risen body, and we no longer are slaves to the old state in which the law dominated with its literalism that led to our spiritual death, the death of sin. We moved to the life of grace which we obtained through Him, and which we would have never obtained while under the law, for the law lacked the power which man needs in his spiritual struggling to gain strength and to be fortified to keep the commandments and fulfill them. The law did not give with its commandments the spiritual power which man needed to fulfill them. But under the grace covenant God's Holy Spirit works within man to free him from the old man and grant him new life and spirit.

The Law and the Falling Man

(Rom 7: 7-25)

The law and sin

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was

producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do, If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom 7: 7-25)

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"

It is clear from the preceding verses that freedom from the law was connected with freedom from sin, therefore the apostle inquires: "Is the law sin?" Or in other words, 'Is law a law of evil?' Of course the apostle denies such a conclusion, because the law was given by God who is by nature good. So, what is the relation or the connection between the law and sin? The apostle states that the law is not the source of sin, but the

source of our knowledge of sin. This means that the law plays the role of the teacher who guides to the truth that we may discern between good and evil, between the holy and the unclean, between the permitted and the prohibited, between the permissible and the forbidden, and between what we should do and what we have to avoid. The knowledge of sin came only through the law, because I would not have known that lust is evil unless the law had warned me against it (see Ex 20: 17). The law then did not give me the will to do sin, but only to know sin. The apostle says in another part of his Epistle to the Romans, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom 3: 20)

"But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead."

So, the law is not the cause of sin or its source. Sin is not originated from the law, but it takes its impetus from the things forbidden by the law. As the apostle says sin takes opportunity by the commandment. The law reveals the spirit of violation and disobedience within man. In other words, the spirit of disobedience of a disobedient person appears in his violation of the commands of the law. Sin therefore finds an opportunity in the law to practice its activities, because where there is no law that prohibits or forbids committing a certain act, sin will be in a state of death or stillness. For by the words "apart from the law sin is dead" the apostle does not mean that sin had no existence without the law, but rather that its action and activity were in a state similar to death because there was no law that binds man. In the commandments of the law sin existed, with its spirit of disobedience and rebelling, and found an opportunity to appear, to act, and to raise all types of lusts "produced in me all manner of evil desire". So, sin should not be attributed to the law, but "Each one is

tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." (Jas 1: 14)

"I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died."

Sin found in the law the opportunity to act and work, therefore the apostle says that he was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died. This means that the apostle at a certain time of his life believed that he was leading a virtuous spiritual life, because he was not aware of the power of sin or the law. But when he knew the commandments of the law he knew the sin that had been within him and he was not aware of its existence. This stage resembles the stage of childhood in the life of all people, because in this stage a person is ignorant of the knowledge of good and evil. A person in this stage performs evil deeds among other deeds, without being aware of doing evil, i.e., out of ignorance. When a person grows and becomes mature and knows what is good and what is evil, then a person becomes aware of the evil state he is in. Then the feeling of blame and remorse arises on doing sin. Without the law man cannot be aware of his spiritual death, so he does not feel sin, or rather sin becomes to him as if dead. Through the law man discovers the state of sin in which he lives and the spiritual death he suffers. This is what the apostle means by the words, "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died."

"And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death."

In the law then man discovers his spiritual death because of his disobedience and violation. This means that the commandment which had been given to the man to lead and guide him to life brought on the

contrary a different result leading to death. Here we should note that the law is not the cause of this spiritual death, because it was given to give life. It is the cause of knowledge of this spiritual death, or it is the source of our knowledge of the state of sin in which we were abiding.

"For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me."

The apostle repeats what he said before, that sin takes opportunity in the commandment or the law. The law was a mere opportunity to reveal how sin is evil, "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment deceived me." And "it killed me" as the apostle says. Sin which was hidden in him took occasion by the commandment to deceive him. So sin is not the cause of deceit, but the cause of revealing the deceit of sin. The commandment is not the cause of death, but the cause of revealing the death ensuing from sin. So the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews spoke about "the deceitfulness of sin", and he warned us against the deceit of sin, saying, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor 11: 3)

"Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."

It is true that the apostle spoke about the connection between the law and sin, but he also was keen on removing away from our minds the wrong thought that the law is the cause of sin. Here he affirms this very evidently, by describing the law as "holy", and describing the commandment as "holy and just and good". So the law is holy, and every commandment of its commandments is holy and just and good. The law was given for the benefit of mankind, and for establishing the rules of

justice, and keeping order and peace in the world. Its aims were good, therefore the apostle says in his First Epistle to Timothy, "But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully." (1 Tim 1: 8)

"Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin,"

If the law has been connected with sin, has then what is good become death? That is, has the law which is holy and good become the cause of death? Certainly we should not believe that the law has been given for our spiritual death, but death has been brought by sin into mankind so that it may be revealed how evil it is. The evil of sin appears in that it has been brought to us through the law which is good and holy, and it brought death for us.

The Relationship between Sin and the Law

"But sin ... was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin"

The apostle asserts what he said before that the law is holy and good. He says, "The law is spiritual", for the law is the gift of God's Holy Spirit, aiming at making man lead a virtuous spiritual life. If man suffers spiritual death, this is not due to the law, but to man himself through slavery to his fleshly desires and becoming sold to sin. Sin possesses man as a lord possesses a slave, and it brings him death and perdition.

"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do,"

With fascinating words the apostle depicts the internal strife which man suffers in his struggle against sin. The apostle clarifies that what he did was out of blindness and drunkenness with the whims of sin, not knowing what he was doing. What he did was not that which he wanted within his heart but what he hated, because he was falling under the darkness and power of sin. For when sin dominates over a person, it robs him of his will and blinds his inner sight. It becomes the source of his thoughts, his deeds and his acts. It brings division inside man and what man does will not be an expression of his real self but another different self created by sin inside him. It makes man do what he does not will or want to do, because he does not do his own will but the will of the sin abiding in him.

"If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good."

The apostle deduces from the inner strife within man what proves that the law is good and holy, for if he does what he wills not to do, then as he says, is evidence that the law is good. In other words if he feels disapproval and dissatisfaction with the sins and trespasses he is doing, this means that he agrees and asserts that the commandments of the law are good, though he cannot perform them.

"But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."

The apostle goes on depicting the condition of inner strife, indicating that he no longer does what he wills, but what the sin dwelling in him wills. He is in a state of captivity and slavery to sin. It is no longer he who does an act but the sin dwelling in him and dominating over all his powers and desires. This means that sin creates within him another

self and compels him to do what he does not want to do, robbing him of all power to fulfill his real desires.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find."

The apostle says that he knows that there is no more anything good in him after having become under the dominion and power of his body which is easily attracted to sin. Regarding his will for doing good and virtue, this will is still under his power and his authority, but to do good and virtue is beyond his control.

We would mention here some remarks:

We notice that the apostle Paul did not connect between the body and sin, for he did not say that the body is sin, as some philosophers and religions do. If the body itself was sin, this would mean that Adam was created sinful, as he was created with a body, but we know that Adam was not created sinful, but he committed sin afterwards by his own will. It is therefore wrong to look to ourselves as composed of two conflicting elements, one is the spirit, representing the element of righteousness in us, and the other is the flesh, representing the element of evil. Righteousness and evil are two things not linked with the body or the spirit regarding their nature and attributes, but they are linked with the will.

The will can do good and can do evil, and man with his body can be virtuous and can be evil. However, the body may easily be deceived and attracted to sin, and sin may easily enter into us through our senses and our bodies. That is perhaps the reason that it is linked with the body,

not because the body is the element of sin in man, but because the body may submit and be attracted to sin. On the other hand, our bodies also may be elevated to become a temple of God, that is, a dwelling place for God's Holy Spirit. So the body may be an abode for sin, or an abode for God. What determines the matter is our will. With our will we can make our bodies a dwelling place for evil or a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

Here also we notice that the apostle distinguishes between the will and the act. He says that the good will is present with him, but to do good is something he cannot do. So, the will corresponds with the desire and the choice. We desire to do virtue, but we are unable to fulfill our desire. The main role of Christianity was strengthening our will.

"For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."

As the apostle says, I do not do the good which I desire to do and will, but I am unable to fulfill my desire and perform my will. Moreover, because of the sin that dwells in me, the evil which I do not wish to do or desire, I find myself pushed to do it submitting to its authority. If I do the evil which I do not will, this means that I no more have control over myself. It also means that it is not I who do evil, but the sin that dwells in me and captivates me, rendering me a slave to it.

"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good"

Although I desire to do good, I find within me a law which I have become connected with because of sin, that makes evil closer to me than good.

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man"

Nevertheless, the law of sin did not abolish "the law of God" which I delight in following according to "the inward man". This means in spite of the authority of evil, my mind and heart, which represent the inward man, feel delighted in the commandments of God's law.

Notice that the words "the inward man" refer to the powers and capabilities of man which are sensual, like the mind, the soul, and the heart. We also should not mingle between the meaning of "the inward" and the meaning of "the new", for the new, or the new life, or the new man, compared to the old man, is the work of the Holy Spirit in man. But "the inward" refers to the meaning implied in verses 23 and 25 of the same Chapter, i.e. "the mind". The inward man here refers to the quality with which the human soul is endowed to discern between what is true and good and what is false and evil. This inward man feels delight and joy with regard to God's law and desires to walk according to it in spite of the resistance from sin which dwells in man and dominates over him.

"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

The apostle speaks here about two laws: "the law of sin" and "God's law". The law of sin fights and resists the law of the mind, but God's law gains the conviction of the apostle's mind, heart and

conscience. This is called by the apostle in another part "the law of mind" (Rom 7: 23)

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

This severe strife which man suffers due to sin makes the apostle cries for the help of God's mercy, saying, "Who will deliver me from the body of death?" The body of death means the body which is captivated and subjected to the authority of sin, and which in its subjection to sin has become the cause and means through which death enters into man.

"I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

Here the apostle gives thanks to God, because such severe strife ended with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ who arranged salvation for mankind.

In this verse, the apostle Paul gives a brief summary of all that which he mentioned about such sever strife. We, as human beings, without God's help and assistance, with our body we serve "the law of sin", but with "the law of the mind", i.e. the mind, the conscience, and the other capabilities of the inner men, serve "the law of God". However, this division in man's personality caused by sin, stops and comes to an end under the covenant of grace. Now, thanks to Christ's redeeming work, are able to dedicate all our bodily and inner powers to serve the law of God.

=====+=====

Chapter (8)
Life of blessedness for those born in Christ Jesus
(Rom 8: 1-39)

The New Life given through the Holy Spirit to the Justified

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom 8: 1-8)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

In the preceding Chapter, the apostle Paul spoke about the bad state of man in the stage of submission to the law, and in this Chapter he speaks about man after gaining the new life through the Holy Spirit. Actually this Chapter is considered the core of the Epistle to the Romans. If the Epistle to the Romans occupies a distinguished position among the

other epistles of the apostle Paul, this Chapter in particular occupies a distinguished position among the other chapters of the Epistle, in this Chapter he proclaims to the faithful the heavenly forgiveness which they gained through the Lord Jesus. For through uniting with Christ Jesus by believing in Him and obeying His commandments, we became freed from any condemnation. There is no longer any condemnation so long as we do not follow our fleshly lusts and abide by the commandments of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Christ says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (Jn 5: 24) And Paul the apostle says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor 5: 17)

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

In Christ Jesus we gained the gift of freedom, and became no longer subject to the authority of sin and death. This is because the power of the Holy Spirit, which is life granted to those united with Christ, this power freed us from the law and from the power of sin and death. The Holy Spirit to the faithful is a vivid active power leading him to do good and frees him from the domination of evil, so that he may not afterwards be subject to judgment and condemnation. The apostle James says, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." (Jas 1: 25) And the apostle Paul says, "But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." (Gal 3: 25)

"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,"

The law of the Spirit freed us and gave us what the law of the letter was unable to realize, because the law of the letter does not contain in itself the grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it was not able to conquer and overcome the desires of the flesh. But this which the law was unable to fulfill God fulfilled. To remove away from us the authority of sin, God sent His only-begotten Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, but not in an actual sinful flesh, or a body with sin. By this God abolished sin through the body of His Son, which though not a sinful flesh, bore the consequences of sin and was given up to death.

Notice the following phrases:

What the law could not do: The role of the law is tutoring. The law guides us to the truth and separates between good and evil, and calls us to abide by righteousness and justice, BUT it does not justify. The law desires our salvation, but cannot accomplish this salvation. The law is not evil or sin, but it is holy and good, yet at the same time too weak and unable to grant salvation to those who hold to it, because it does not justify.

In that it ...: The apostle here ascribes the inability of the law to the state of the human nature and its corruption, by which the law is unable to justify and sanctify. In other words, because of this corruption we cannot be justified or sanctified by means of the law. We are unable to keep the commandments of the law, or to abide by its commands and prohibitions. By breaking the law which is a covenant of work not of grace, it cannot give us a saved nature or realize a radical change in our tendencies towards evil. Its work does not extend to changing the human

nature and correcting its corruption. It leaves us in the state in which we are as it found us. The law as a covenant of works lays rules for behavior and conduct, unlike the covenant of grace which gives forgiveness, salvation and justification.

Weak through the flesh: The apostle refers here to the desires of the flesh and its corrupt whims, for these hinder a person from fulfilling the commandments of the law. The body is unable to fulfill the commandments of the law.

In the likeness of sinful flesh: The Lord Christ took the human nature, but not the sin of man. That is why the apostle uses the word "likeness". The Lord Christ said, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (Jn 8: 46) As for taking upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh, this is evident in that He accepted in His body the rules of the law, meaning: circumcision and cleansing statutes, getting baptized by John the Baptist, and finally the death on the cross.

He condemned sin in the flesh: The Greek word "katakrinw" means "judged / katadikazw" or abolished / kataluw". This means that the Lord Christ judged sin and condemned it and abolished its power when He offered His sinless body to be crucified and to die bearing in it the consequences of sin. Christ was sinless, and lived sinless, and offered His body to redeem mankind from the authority of sin.

Briefly speaking, God has saved us from the dominion of sin and realized for us victory over it, a matter which the law was unable to fulfill, when He gave His Son on the cross for the redemption of mankind "who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification." (Rom 4: 25)

Addressing the Israeli men, the apostle Paul said, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13: 38) And in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle says, "For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and un-profitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." (Heb 7: 18, 19) And "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil ... to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb 2: 14, 17) Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree') (Gal 3: 13).

"... that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Whatever the law requires that we walk in righteousness, this we have to fulfill completely, because we no longer walk according to the lusts of the flesh, but according to our sublime spiritual powers which have already been enlightened and strengthened by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Notice the following phrases:

Requirement of the law: This means what the law considers and judges as righteous, and the righteous behavior which it requires us to fulfill.

According to the Spirit: This refers to the spiritual life which the faithful attain to, or rather refers to the Holy Spirit and His relationship and work in the human soul.

This means that while we walk according to the Spirit we now fulfill the commandments that were required from us and the righteousness which the law required us to fulfill. So, walking according to the Spirit does not invalidate the requirement of the law, but rather establishes and accomplishes it, or as the apostle Paul says in the same Epistle, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." (Rom 3: 31) The Lord Christ says, "Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matt 5: 17) And the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians says, "I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh ... But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law ... If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Gal 5: 16, 18, 25)

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

Now we do not walk according to the lusts of the flesh, but according to the requirements of the Holy Spirit, because those who are under the dominion of the flesh have their thoughts, interests, and desires according to the requirements of the flesh. On the contrary, those who follow their lofty spiritual qualities in their life, having submitted to the Holy Spirit and His work, they have their thoughts, interests, and desires according to the soul born in the Holy Spirit.

Now let us explain some of the preceding phrases:

According to the flesh: This means those who walk according to the requirements and interests of the flesh. The words refer to the weak spiritual state of some people.

Set their minds on ...: They have their thoughts and their hearts focused in something, that is, on the desires of the flesh caused by walking according to the flesh.

According to the Spirit: This refers to those who walk according to the requirements of the Holy Spirit working in the human soul.

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

It is clear that the requirements of the body are opposite to the requirements of the Spirit. In the case of the old man who is subject to the dominion of sin and thinks, seeks and desires things required by the flesh, he ends with spiritual death or separation from God. But the person who thinks, seeks and desires things required by the Spirit, this spiritual desire will lead to life and peace. Those who walk according to the requirements of the Spirit do not die but have life, because they avoid spiritual death and separation from God. This is the meaning of "having life", for this spiritual life realizes peace between man and God. This peace is lost through sin, because it creates a wall of enmity between God and man (Rom 6: 21-33). The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, says, "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (Gal 6: 8)

Now notice the meaning of the following phrases:

Carnally minded: The conflict between the flesh and the spirit is not a metaphysical conflict due to the nature of each, but rather a moral

conflict. The apostle therefore does not mention the enmity between the body as flesh and the spirit as spirit, because man is not created with conflicting elements, and because the body is not evil in itself, for it can be a dwelling place for God's Holy Spirit. Man has been created with perfect body and spirit, but sin brought in this division and conflict in the human personality and created enmity between the body and the spirit. The apostle does not see any evil in the body, but rather mentions the desires of the flesh directed towards sin, evil, and corruption.

Death: It means the death of the soul because it went far away from God, while our life is in being near to God and uniting with Him. A soul that lives according to the flesh is a dead, miserable and unhappy soul.

Spiritually minded: By this is meant spiritual thinking. The apostle does not speak about the spirit as an element, but about the spiritual qualities in man, directed spiritually, or the human mind when it is interested in spiritual matters and receives the work of the Holy Spirit in it.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

The carnal mind bears death to man, because it is a state of enmity between man and God. Man in this case does not submit to God's law, nor abide by His commandments. Moreover, such a person does not possess the strength or the power to submit to God. A person who is carnally minded and subject to the desires of the flesh cannot be interested in God nor submit to His commandments. James the apostle says, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world

makes himself and enemy of God." (Jas 4: 4) As for those who are unable to submit to God because they are subject to the lusts of their bodies, the Lord Christ Himself said about them, "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." (Matt 12: 34, 35) "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do ... He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." (Jn 8: 43, 44, 47) And John the apostle says, "But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'" (Jn 12: 37-40)

Those who live a worldly carnal life cannot do what pleases God.

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are

led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom 8: 9-17)

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

We are no longer captives or slaves to the lusts of the flesh, but we have become dominated by the lofty spiritual qualities in us, which were enlightened and renewed and born again by the grace of the Holy Spirit, so long as God's Spirit dwells in us. But if a person does not have inside him the Spirit of Christ, he cannot be a follower to Christ. The apostle Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3: 16) And speaking about the work of God's Spirit in man, "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor 12: 3)

A fact which the apostle Paul declares is that the Holy Spirit dwells in the faithful through His Holy Spirit, and this has the greatest influence in directing our spiritual life, and even our intellectual life.

Notice here the meaning of the following phrases:

You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit: This means that you do not walk in the flesh in the works of darkness. The faithful have

bodies but at the same time they walk in the Spirit, and live a lofty spiritual life by the act of the Holy Spirit who enlightens and guides their lofty spiritual dispositions.

Dwells in you: The Holy Spirit dwells in man as if in His own house or temple, and He dominates over the person where He dwells as a house owner. So the Holy Spirit is present in man as a house owner in His house. The Holy Spirit reigns, dominates, manages, opens, and shuts, as a house owner does in his house.

"And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

If Christ dwells in you by His Spirit, your body will be subject only to the natural death which is the result of the original sin, but the spirit will have an everlasting life because of the righteousness which Christ, glory to Him, has given us, and because we have become able to attain virtue and practice it through the grace given us. The apostle Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor 5: 17) And in his Epistle to the Galatians, he says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal 2: 20) And in his Epistle to the Philippians he says, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil 1: 21)

Let us see the meaning of the following phrases:

If Christ is in you: It is the same as "If the Spirit of Christ is in you", for where the Spirit of Christ is, Christ is there. The same applies to

the words, "If the Spirit is in you", for who has the Holy Spirit, also has Christ, for the work of the Holy Spirit depicts Christ in us.

Life because of righteousness: The words may refer to the justification obtained by the faithful, because God has justified us. But the word "righteousness" also may be understood in comparison with the word "sin" to mean "all virtue".

The spirit: Here the word refers to the spirit of man which lives by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

We no longer sin because our bodies had been subjected to death, for we have been given the opportunity to rid our bodies from that death. God's Spirit who dwells in us and who has raised Christ from the dead, He Himself will give life to our mortal bodies. This Spirit who raised Christ from the dead also will raise us from sin. Therefore, the apostle says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "And God both raised up the Lord and will raise us up by His power." (1 Cor 6: 14) And in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians he says, "Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself." (2 Cor 4: 14)

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh you will die;"

If we have been freed through our Lord Jesus Christ from the dominion of sin and from death, and since we are indebted to God for these gifts and mercies because He gave them to us, we therefore are not subject to the flesh or indebted to it that we may live according to its

desires. We are indebted to God, and we have to live according to His commandments. That is why the apostle Paul says, "Because anyone who has died has been set free from sin." (Rom 6:7; Gal 6:8; Eph 4: 22-24)

To live according to the flesh ...: We should not live according to the desires of the flesh from which we have been set free, for they carry death for us. Nothing in the flesh impels us to submit to it and to serve it as slaves. We are not indebted to it for anything, but we are indebted to Christ, for it is He who freed us and gave us salvation and resurrection from the death of sin. We are indebted to Christ for the Redemption and the blessings resulting from it. Therefore we do not live according to the flesh but according to Christ.

"To live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

If you live slaves to the lusts of your bodies, you will be exposed to eternal death and will suffer the everlasting torment as a result of sin in the coming world due to the eternal separation between man and God. But if through your spiritual powers, revived by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, you put to death the evil deeds of the flesh, you will live forever a blessed and happy life. Notice here that the apostle says "you put to death the deeds of the body", not "put to death the body", because the body itself is not evil. But evil comes when the natural impulses are directed to and connected with lust and sin. So, by putting to death here is meant the evil lusts. This also is what the Lord Christ meant when He said, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you." (Matt 5: 8) Here is not meant cutting off a hand or a leg as members of the body, for mere cutting off a member does not do away with sin or stop lusts. The members of the body are mere tools for lusts, nevertheless

they also can be used as good tools for the glory of God (Rom 6: 13). The body itself is not evil or sin, but it may be used by the lust or the sin, the same as the lust or the sin may use the mind or the soul or the spirit. Therefore the apostle warns here that we have to put to death the evil deeds of the flesh, for these may make us lose the salvation which we gained through the blood of Christ: "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Cor 9: 27) And in the Epistle to the Colossians, the apostle says, "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." (Col 3: 9, 10) In the Epistle to the Galatians, the apostle refers explicitly to the deeds of the flesh, saying, "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal 5: 19-21) But what are the works of the spirit which put to death the works of the flesh? The apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, after speaking about the works of the flesh, says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Gal 5: 22, 23)

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."

The sons of God are those who are led by God's Spirit and submit to Him. He reigns over them and over their life, directing and guiding them. However, we are not led by God's Spirit involuntarily, but with our

choice and free will. We are tied with the chains of love, faith, and abiding by truth and duty. We are freely led with not spirit of oppression or slavery. We voluntarily submit our will to God and He leads our spirit to good and virtue, as the apostle says, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." (Gal 5: 18)

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"

What is the evidence that we have become God's children? The evidence is that the Holy Spirit replaced the spirit of the law which was a spirit of fear and slavery, to the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out to God, calling Him Father. The words "Abba, Father" refer to the unity between two peoples, that is, the Jews and the Gentiles in one people, for the word "Abba" refers to the adoption of the faithful of the Jews, whereas the word "Patyr" refers to the adoption of the faithful of the Gentiles or the Greeks. The Jews addressed God by the word "Abba", and the Gentiles addressed Him by the word "Patyr", each in their own language. This means that each were able to obtain this adoption, no difference in Christianity between one people and another except through faith.

The apostle was speaking here about the new status of the believers, and about the new relationship which they attained with God, a relationship which was not available for God's people in the Olden times. The apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says, "... and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb 2: 15)

And in his Epistle to the Galatians, the apostle says, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal 4: 4-7) The Lord Christ in the Prayer in Gethsemane said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You." (Mk 14: 36)

Briefly speaking, in the New Testament, we have received the Spirit who made us as sons, by whom we are able to cry out to God, addressing Him, "Abba, Father". So we are released from the spirit of slavery which had made us in a state of fear.

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

This means that we feel this sonship, and sense it with our spirits and hearts which acquired such sensation and feeling from God's Spirit. Thus the testimony of our hearts is accomplished, supported, and approved, even urged by God's Holy Spirit.

"And if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

Since we have become children, naturally also we have become heirs. We are heirs of God because He is our Father, and heirs jointly with Christ, for He has put Himself as a Brother to us. But we become heirs with Christ if we suffer with Him, for then we will be glorified with

Him, as the apostle says in his Epistle to the Galatians, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal 3: 26-29)

"Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal 4: 7) And in the First Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle says, "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 1: 9). Peter the apostle likewise says, "But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Pet 4: 13) "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed ..." (1 Pet 5: 1) And the apostle Paul in his Second Epistle to Timothy, says, "For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." (2 Tim 2: 11, 12)

The suffering of the creation because of sin

And the hope of the coming glory

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. for we know that the whole creation

groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." (Rom 8: 18- 25)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The apostle Paul indicated that before we partake of the heavenly glory we have to partake of the suffering of the Lord Christ, here on the earth. Nevertheless, the sufferings and hardships of the present time should not terrify us, because these sufferings cannot be equal to the heavenly glories which we shall obtain in future. Therefore the apostle says in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor 4: 17, 18) St. Peter likewise says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 1: 6, 7) and see also (1 Pet 4: 13)

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God."

We will be in a state of a superior great glory which the inanimate creation waits eagerly for such revealing of the sons of God. Therefore

Peter the apostle says, "... looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Pet 3: 12, 13) Also concerning revealing the sons of God the apostle Paul says in his Epistle to the Colossians, "When Christ who is our life appears then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Col 3: 4) And John the apostle in his First Epistle says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 Jn 3: 2) No doubt also the revealing of the sons of God will be accompanied by separation of the wicked. This will be on the Day of the Lord in His Second coming, for then the sons of God will be revealed. Now they are hidden from the sight of the world.

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope."

The creation has been subjected to death and perdition, a judgment which was not issued as a result of a fault or a willful act on the part of the creation, but was rendered by God who subjected it to destruction, with hope expected for renewing it thereafter.

On this the Wise Solomon said, "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." (Eccl 1: 2) And the Lord God said to Adam, " Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field." (Gen 3: 17, 18)

"... because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

What is this hope for which the creation waits? It is the hope that the creation also will be delivered and freed from subjection to corruption and destruction. It will have a share of the glorious liberty that will be for the children of God (see 2 Pet 3: 13; 1 Jn 3: 3) Peter the apostle did not say that the creation will be glorified together with man, because such glory is for the rational beings only, so he only said that it will be delivered from death and destruction.

"... for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."

The liberty of the creation will take place in future, and we know by experience that the creation groans and labors together until now. The words "groans and labors" indicate that the nature share suffering with man (see Jn 16: 31). Man groans and labors because of sin, and waits for deliverance from the suffering of the present world in the glory that will be revealed.

So, the nature shares with the man, for as when Adam sinned the land was cursed because of sin, which means that the land shared with Adam the consequence of the sin, by bringing forth thorns and thistles. The same will happen when the sin will be removed away from the man with its consequences, for all the creation also will share with the man this transformation to a better state than the present state. This means that the deficiencies we see at present in the creation, like the earthquakes and volcanoes, and whatever reveals imperfection of the creation as a result of the sin, all such deficiencies will come to an end. The creation will be

renewed to conform to the new state, that is, the glorious state of the children of God in the future.

When God created all creation, He saw everything that it was good. It was created in such a beautiful state reflecting the beauty and perfection of the divine handwork.

But this image of the beautiful creation became distorted, whether for inanimate creation, animals, or plants. So waiting for the revelation of the glory of God's children, or becoming delivered of subjection to corruption, means that the creation will restore its beautiful image in which it had been created from the beginning. It seems as if the creation were a human being feeling and sensing the bad results of the sin, and is groaning and laboring because of it, and as if the groaning and suffering of this human being will come to an end later on.

Of course the creation does not feel or sense, but we mean that it serves as a mirror reflecting the bad consequences of the sin, as well as the consequences of the glory expected for the children of God in future.

"Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

Not the creation alone groans, but we also groan, although we have obtained and received the gifts of the Holy Spirit which resemble the first fruits of the coming heavenly good things. The expression "firstfruits of the Spirit" refer to tasting the coming heavenly good things from the time being. From now on we receive the guarantee of the Spirit, some or part of the bliss which we will obtain in the future. We also groan within

ourselves, waiting the fulfillment of the glory of adoption, and our bodies are freed from corruption. This means that the perfection of the adoption will only be fulfilled after our bodies arise from death and are liberated from corruption. So, if the soul is the important part in the man, the Lord Christ by His blood also has guaranteed the salvation of our bodies as well, for the bodies will also share the glory of God's children. The resurrection of the bodies is expressed by the words "the redemption of our bodies". Our bodies will be liberated of death and corruption, and if our bodies are now subject to weakness and deficiencies, they will afterwards have the image of the body of Christ (1 Cor 15: 42)

This adoption which we expect is not yet revealed in its full image, but as if hidden behind a cloud. But in the Second Coming of the Lord, God will reveal this glory, and will publicly reveal His children. The adoption has actually taken place from now, in the present life, but afterwards it will be revealed publicly before all.

"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."

In this verse the apostle lays great stress on the hope, for we do not build our faith on the present things, but on what we expect to be realized in the future. By this hope we wait for revealing the adoption. By this hope which we have in God we obtained salvation, which means that our salvation is not built on the present things but on what we expect in future. The hope which we expect and is realized before our sight now is not hope, for what man can see with bodily eyes how can he expect it again? So, hope is related to what we do not see now, but is related with the future. That is why we wait for it with perseverance. In this hope we

expect adoption for the redemption of our bodies. This is clearly explained by Paul the apostle in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor 5: 7) "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb 11: 1)

God supports our spiritual life (Rom 8: 26-39)

The Intercession of the Holy Spirit

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses; for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom 8: 26-27)

As the case is with the bodily eyes that its power fades and cannot discern things clearly, but perhaps different from their reality, so also the case with the human soul eyes. The spiritual weakness makes the soul's eye unable to know what to pray for as ought to be. Yet the Holy Spirit intercedes for us by inspiring us with groanings that cannot be uttered. The Holy Spirit grants that our hearts the ability to understand deeply to an extent which a human mind cannot attain. The Holy Spirit gives light to our insight, and teaches us what we should pray for and how prayer should be like. The apostle Paul here speaks about the kind of intercession of the Holy Spirit. Intercession in this context means that the Holy Spirit supports and helps the faithful in their prayers. The Holy Spirit enables the heart to go deep into the depths of God's mysteries, to be able to know the facts and reveal the mysteries which the human mind cannot reach. So, a real prayer is that which the Holy Spirit teaches us.

Our prayers should be acceptable and conforming to God's will. It should be in the spirit or by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹

The prayers which we lift up, motivated by the Holy Spirit and His guidance, which are expressed by the words "groanings that cannot be uttered", these are acceptable and pleasing to God, because God searches the hidden thoughts of our hearts. He knows what the Spirit wants to say through these groanings, as the apostle Paul says, "He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." This further means that the Holy Spirit through the inspirations and guidance He grants us intercedes and mediates for us only in whatever conforms to the will of God. This is because He knows this will, for He is the Spirit of God. Now let us see what the following phrases mean:

The verb "Sunantilambanete": It is the same verb used in the story of Mary and Martha, when Martha asked the Lord Jesus to tell May to assist her. So the verb means: "assistance, help, extending a hand".

Our weaknesses: This expression refers to the physical and spiritual weaknesses, as well as to the tribulations and trials which a faithful faces in his life, which requires patience on his side. The Holy Spirit helps a person with what he suffers of misery, misfortune, and distress.

What we should pray for: These words refer to the subject of prayer, i.e., the matter for which we pray. Paul the apostle in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to

¹ See our book titled "The Holy Spirit in the Epistles of Paul the Apostle" under "the Intercession of the Spirit (Al Mahaba Bookshop, 1963)

me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, from My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor 12: 7-9)

Furthermore, the words "as we ought" according to some commentators refer to the state in which the one who prays should be while lifting up a prayer. This is clear in the First Epistle to Timothy, where the apostle speaks about the way we should lift up a prayer, saying, "Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works." (1 Tim 2: 8-10)

Makes intercession for us: Christ intercedes for us in heaven, and the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of enlightenment teaches us what and how we should pray. Being the Holy Spirit, He awakens within us how our prayers should be. As a comforting Spirit He removes away fear and gives us assurance and peace, and inflames within us hope.

With groanings which cannot be uttered: This means groanings which meaning and content cannot be expressed in human language. The mind cannot translate the language of the heart which the Holy Spirit brings into the depths of the divine matters. The Holy Spirit does not utter in prayers words or literary styles, but He strengthens our faith and fervency, and reveals our readiness and deepens our desire for prayer. Whatever the mind is unable to comprehend and express, this is known to God.

He searches the hearts: This does not mean that He reveals what He had no knowledge of, but that He understands fully the depths and hidden things of the heart. As for the words, "the mind of the heart", they mean what the Spirit desires.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sakes we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8: 28- 39)

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

In Verses (21, 22) the apostle says that we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Actually in the present life we are granted not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer. Nevertheless we trust that all things work together for good to those who love God. Those who love Him, have been called and elected according to His foreknowledge, and they accepted the call for salvation, how then could all things not work for their good and benefit. See what the following phrases mean:

All things work together for good to those who love God: As James the apostle says, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (Jas 1: 12) So, whatever happens in the world, and whatever were the circumstances and conditions, all things work for good, for those who love God (not for all people).

Called according to His purpose: In the Epistle to the Ephesians likewise the apostle says, "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the council of His will." (Eph 1: 11) And "according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph 3: 11)

Those called are all the faithful, no distinction, who through baptism became members of the body of Christ. The distinction is between two types of those called: those who obey the call and walk in a suitable moral life, and those who do not respond to the call. As stated in (Mt. 20: 16, 24: 14) "many are called, and few chosen". There is no such distinction in the Epistles of Paul the apostle, nor is there any support of

the view of St. Augustine which distinguishes between some called according to the purpose of God, and others not according to His purpose. For it is unreasonable that God calls some against His purpose. If it happens that a certain group of believers do not walk in a pure spiritual life, this does not mean that their call was not according to God's purpose. Paul the apostle explained well that many Christians were weak in faith (Rom 14: 1, 15: 1), and that there were false brethren (Gal 2: 4; 1 Cor 11: 13; Rom 16: 17). However, this does not imply any doubt or fear on the side of the apostle that they do not accept faithfully the call or do not change their hearts truly. All Christians, without exception, were to the apostle called and chosen by God, that is, the object of God's love and election from the beginning. The faith which they accepted was not something that happened by mere chance, but was in fulfillment of God's eternal purpose and will towards them. The fact that all Christians are called and chosen by God urged the apostle to encourage them to have patience and to walk always in the glorious spiritual life in Christ Jesus. The apostle says, "For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness." (1 Thess 4: 7) "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess 5: 9).

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified these He also glorified."

The apostle indicates five stages through which a believer passes to attain the full glory:

He foreknew – He predestined – He called – He justified – He glorified

We notice here that the tense of the verb is the past, even the glory of the life to come is expressed as if it had been fulfilled, for the glory of the faithful has begun since their call and faith in Christ. In all the stages of the spiritual life of the faithful, the divine factor for their salvation and glorification is evident. **As for the human factor it is clear in the word "foreknew".**

God knew in advance those who would respond to the work of the grace and live in Christ. However, some would understand the work "foreknew" to mean those who He had chosen. But this election is general, for God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2: 4), **therefore there must be some justifications why God prefers one to the other.** God's foreknowledge is the first step, the beginning of the salvation process. It does not only represent the action of the divine wisdom which knows all things pertaining to mankind, but also represents God's care for them, they being the object of His thinking. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ and to acquire the spiritual and ethical image of the Son, and to partake of His holiness and glory. As the apostle Paul says, "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Phil 3: 21) And John the apostle says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 Jn 3: 2) So, all the faithful are prepared to partake of the glory of the Son. The Son is in the front and the faithful follow Him, walking after His steps, and attached to Him as firstborn among many brothers. Nevertheless, this

resemblance does not remove away the difference between the faithful and Christ, for He is the Son of God by nature, whereas the faithful acquire this filiality by adoption or as a gift of the grace.

Those whom God foreknew for their deservedness He predestined, and as a natural result He called them through preaching faith. Those whom He called and they accepted the call, He justified them (i.e., He made them righteous). Then those whom He justified, He made them heirs of the heavenly glory.

We deduce from all this that God deals with mankind with justice without partiality. He does not choose some people for eternal bliss, and others for eternal perdition, but He chooses each one according to what he deserves. That is why those whom He foreknew as deserving, He predestined for that sublime glory of the Son. He did not predestine them for that glory except after knowing that they are worthy of partaking of this glory of the Son. They are those who were ready to accept the call and they accepted it and deserved as a consequence to be justified and glorified by God and to become heirs of the heavenly glory. So, it is the deservedness of those people which made them worthy of the predestination. Furthermore, God's predestination, call, justification, and glorification, are accomplished according to man's status, not being imposed upon man.

Therefore, we cannot ignore in God's call the human factor. For man determines his own destiny and future freely and voluntarily. Nothing is imposed upon man by God, not is it compulsory. We also should not understand the issue of "election" in the light of what is called "God's Act", for this does not conform to the Christian spirit that gives

weight to man's freedom and personal responsibility to determine his own destiny.¹

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Such care revealed by God towards His beloved mankind and towards those who believe in His name, makes us enjoy assurance and peace of heart. If God is for us, guarding and protecting us, who can ever act against us? Who can do us harm so long as we are under God's protection, "The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me." (Ps 116: 6) "... nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from the, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them." (Num 14: 9)

"He who did not spare His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

God delivered His only-begotten Son to death for us, how shall He not give us with Him all gifts and grace which we need for our salvation? If God has given us Christ, how shall we not trust God's love for us and His readiness to give us all that we request or need?

"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."

Who can ever find something to accuse God's elect of or blame them for, since God has forgiven us our sins and justified us? Certainly nobody, for the apostle Paul refers here to the text in the Book of Isaiah which reads:

¹ See my book "The Issue of Election", Al Mahaba Bookshop, 1975

"For the Lord will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed. He is near who justifies Me; who will contend with Me? Let him come near Me. Surely the Lord God will help Me; who is he who will condemn Me? Indeed they will all grow old like a garment; the moth will eat them up." (Isa 50: 7-9)

And in the Revelation we read: "Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.'" (Rev 12: 10, 11)

"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

The apostle wonders who is he who condemns or can judge us?! Is there a Judge other than Christ? It is Christ alone who judges us, because He alone died for our sins and is also risen from the dead. He sits now at the right hand of the divine Majesty, in His own divine authority and kingdom. The word "condemns" does not only mean the decision of condemnation, but the practical execution thereof as Christ has condemned sin (Rom 8: 3). And as the apostle also says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor 11: 32)

Notice also the gradual description of the Lord Christ: that He died, but did not continue dead, for He is alive, not only alive but also He sits

in the glory of the heavenly throne, and not only that, but He also intercedes for those who believe in His name. It is Christ then, and no other who can be judge mankind, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" (Ps 110: 1) (see 1 Jn 2:1, 1 Pet 3: 13, Heb 7: 25, 9: 24)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

A believer can trust the love of Christ who intercedes for us before God. Indeed, how strong is such love which attaches a believer to Christ! And can our love for Christ decrease or can we be separated from Him by any tribulation from outside, or distress within our hearts, or persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword which may come against us?

Notice the following points:

The love of Christ: As in Verse (39) of the same Chapter, speaks about the love of Christ, here also the apostle refers to the love of Christ for the believers, or rather for mankind, rather than the love of mankind for Christ. However, the rest of the verse speaking about the tribulations and distress befalling the believers refer to the love of mankind or the believers for Christ. So the talk here deals with the exchanged love between Christ on one side and mankind on the other side.

The apostle Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians says, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." (2 Cor 5: 14, 15) And in his Epistle to the Romans he says, "Now hope does

not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5: 5-8)

The tribulations: The apostle, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, spoke in detail about the tribulations that may face a believer in his spiritual life, saying: "But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor 6: 4-10) And in the same Epistle he says, "Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep

concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands." (2 Cor 11: 23-33)

All these tribulations cannot separate a true believer from the love of Christ, and Christ in His deep love takes the side of the believer, supporting and strengthening him (see 2 Tim 4: 16, 17)

"As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'"

For holding to Christ nothing can weaken our faith. We are ready to face always perils and death, and be accounted by our persecutors as sheep ready for slaughter. Here the apostle refers to the verse (Ps 44: 23).

The apostle in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men." (1 Cor 4: 9) And "And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?" (1 Cor 15: 30) In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians likewise the apostle says, "For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a

moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor 4: 11-18)

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

In spite of all these perils and suffering we conquer greatly through Christ who loved us and who does not forsake us, but always surround us with His care and love, protecting us from all perils. In the love of Christ we should live in assurance with no fear or terror from anything that may befall us. In Christ we have power enough not only to face the hardships and tribulations, but also to overcome and conquer evil. The story of Christianity facing the Jewish world and the pagan world has always been a story of triumph. The prominent characteristic of Christianity is the cross, suffering and death, but at the same time resurrection, overcoming and triumph.

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The apostle asserts his trust and confidence in the spiritual triumph of the believers, for neither the death with which they frighten us, nor the happy pleasant life with which they tempt and promise us, nor the spiritual host, the things and events which we face in the present times or may face in future, nor any glory that may lift up man, nor anything that may bring man downwards, nor any other creation different from the

visible creation, none of all this can separate us from the love of God demonstrated through Jesus Christ with whom we are closely attached.

Concerning the spiritual host, the apostle Paul mentions in this verse, "angels, principalities, and powers", and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, besides the principalities and powers, he adds "might and dominion" (Eph 1: 21). Then in the Epistle to the Colossians the apostle adds "thrones". So the apostle Paul mentions the following angelic hosts: the angels, principalities, powers, dominion, might, thrones. However, the fathers are not in agreement concerning the angelic hosts or their ranks, for some mention five angelic hosts, while others mention eight hosts, and so on. There is a whole research on this point, which you may refer to.¹

=====+=====

Chapter (9)
God's faithfulness in His promises in spite of
Unfaithfulness of Israel
(Rom 9: 1- 33)

"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ

¹ See our book "Dogmatic Theology" part III, Youth Bishopric Bookshop, 1992, Ch. 14

came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen." (Romans 9: 1-5)

"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit"

The apostle Paul here affirms that he tells the truth and not lying, being a person who knew Christ and is attached to him closely. He brings his conscience as witness because it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

- **The words "truth in Christ"**, mean the truth derived from uniting with Christ, for unity with Christ prevents one from committing sin, or makes it impossible, as the apostle says in the same Epistle: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Rom 8: 1) So, our unity with Christ represents the greatest power that safeguards us against committing sin.
- **I am not lying:** The apostle asserts in the affirmative that he tells the truth, then he asserts in the negative that he is not lying.
- **My conscience:** The apostle here personifies his conscience, in that he refers to three witnesses: Christ, the Holy Spirit, the conscience. The apostle affirms the truth of his words against the slander addressed against him by the Jews, for they accused him of having adversary attitudes against them. This means that he is facing the danger of their distrust of his words as false, besides his internal distress which he mentions afterwards. Therefore the testimony of the conscience alone is not sufficient, but it should be supported by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Our conscience must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit so that we may believe its testimony.

"That I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart."

Here the apostle asserts the deep and continual internal sorrow that prevails over his heart, due to the unbelief of the Jews, for they are his brethren.

- Notice here the gradual expression by the apostle of his emotions: he mentions first his sorrow, then the result of this sorrow, grief and pain. It is great pain because it is continual prevailing over every moment of his life. The word "heart" expresses the depth of such pain and suffering, for it extends to the depths of the human soul.

"For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh"

In the preceding Chapter the apostle asserted that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ, now here he expresses his readiness to be accursed from Christ, if that be possible, for the sake of his brethren the Jews, his countrymen according to the flesh. He wanted by this to assert his strong desire that the Jews return and believe in Christ, revealing his strong love for them, especially that he had shown in the preceding verses (Rom 8: 38, 39) how strongly he held to Christ that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ. So he does not mean by this that he can ever dispense with Christ. He only wanted to show his readiness to sacrifice, giving as an example the dearest thing to him, just to assert his strong jealousy and love for the Israelites. Moreover, the attachment of the Jews to Christ does not need that the apostle Paul be accursed from Him. In other words the holding of the apostle to Christ was not a stumbling block preventing the Jews from believing and accepting Christ.

The word "accursed": means "anathema" from the Greek verb "anatematizw" which means curse, deprive of, remove away. (see Mt 14: 71; Acts 23: 12, 14, 21: 8; 1 Cor 12: 3, 16: 22; Gal 1: 8, 9).

According to the flesh: these words mean that the relationship between the apostle Paul and the Jews was not only a spiritual relationship but also natural blood relationship.

In general the emotions of Paul the apostle towards his Jewish nation reflect the emotions of Moses the prophet in the olden times towards the Jewish people. Both were jealous for the Jewish nation, and both demonstrated the sorrow and strong pain because of the sins of the people. Both showed readiness to be personally accursed, for Moses the prophet also said to the Lord, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin - but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written." (Ex 32: 31, 32)

"Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises"

The Israelites strayed away from the salvation which Christ had prepared for them as offspring of Jacob. They received their name "Israel" as an honor to them, and they were privileged by the adoption to God and His appearance to them in glory. He gave to them the Old Covenant, the law, the service of God, and the promises. God said to Moses, "you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: Israel is My son, My firstborn.'" (Ex 4: 22) The Lord God explained this, saying, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you

because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers ..." (Deut 7: 6-12). Now let us consider the meaning of the following terms:

- **Adoption:** refers to the adoption which Israel received from the Lord, when He said, "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Ex 4: 22); "You are the children of the Lord your God" (Deut 14: 1); "Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?" (Deut 32: 6) "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son." (Hos 11: 1) However this filiality of Israel was not so strong and so deep as that of the Christians now.
- **The glory:** refers to the demonstration of God in His glory, "Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Ex 24: 16, 17) "Then the cloud covered the

tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Ex 40: 34, 35) "The priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." (1 Kgs 8: 11)

- **The Covenant:** God gave His covenant and repeated it, "I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark - you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you." (Gen 6: 18) And the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (Gen 15: 18) "So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." (Ex 2: 24)
- **The law:** here is meant Mose's law.
- **The service of God:** this refers to the commandments, arrangements, ceremonies, and sacrifices contained in the law and related to worship.
- **The promises:** particularly the promises related to the Messiah, which He gave to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.

"Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."

The Israelites are the fathers from whom Christ came according to the flesh. Christ is God the blessed who has power over all, to whom praise, blessing and glory are due forever. Ss Matthew and Luke spoke about the lineage of the Lord Christ, proving that He came according to the flesh from the Israelites. And St. John in his First Epistle speaks about this fact, saying, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has

given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (1 Jn 5: 20)

The Election Issue

"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.' And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?' But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have

power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: 'I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved.' 'And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God.' Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.' And as Isaiah said before: 'Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.' What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'" (Rom 9: 6- 33)

A general introduction

The election¹ does not mean that God has determined for mankind from eternity their destiny, granting some everlasting bliss, and others everlasting perdition. If so, this would mean that God has done away with man's free will, and what man can do is merely to discover his own life which has already been formulated by the divine will compulsorily, with no intervention from man.

God's foreknowledge that someone will be good and another will be evil is not the determinant factor for the former to walk in the way of good and for the latter to walk in the way of evil. God knew in advance that Adam would fall, and that Judas would deliver Christ, but this does not mean that God's will for Adam to fall and for Judas to deliver Christ; otherwise Adam would not be accountable for his sin, nor Judas accountable for delivering Christ. Both in such a case did what God had willed for them and the destiny he drew for them. None would be accountable for his behavior, and consequently none would be deserving punishment, or God would be oppressive in dealing with mankind!

A question often posed by some people is: If God knows in advance that Adam will sin, why did He not prevent him from sinning?

We say it once more, that God's foreknowledge does not interfere at all with determining the destiny of any human being. Maybe the word suggests such misunderstanding that man has only to do what God had determined for him, and such past determination leads to the present and

¹ See our book "The Election Issue", (A commentary on Chapter 9 of the Epistle to the Romans), Al Mahaba Bookshop, 1975

determines the future! It is as if the past has determined the present and the future, and how they will be like!

If we say that God knew in advance that Adam would sin, this knowledge did not invalidate Adam's freedom to do whatever he wanted as he wanted. So we have to understand the meaning of "time" for God in a different way than for man. When a human being is born, he is not the first being in the universe, for many had been born before, meaning that there is some time before one's birth. That is why we know that there is past, before one's existence, and a present in which man lives, and a future which man expects with matters that will happen afterwards. It is therefore not strange that man does not know the events that have not yet occurred, which may occur in future. This is for man, but for God the matter is completely different. No past preceded God's existence, nor is there anything in the universe which God may be ignorant of, or things He does not know and will come to know afterwards. This would mean that God's knowledge is not perfect, for there may be new things which He does not know. God's perfect knowledge includes the past, the present and the future with all events contained in them. Whatever is new for us the human beings, is not so for God, but is present before His eyes. Everything is present before God, whatever happens, or happened, or will happen afterwards, is present before God. So, if God knew what would be the future of Adam, it merely means that God sees what Adam would do as a present act, even what was going to happen. God knew what Adam was going to do and his destiny.

To put it more simply, let us say: if a student failed in the final exam, it was in God's knowledge that this student would fail. For us we did not know this matter because it has not occurred yet. It is like a

prophecy of future things. For God all future things pass before His sight as present. He sees the student taking the exam, sees his answers corrected, the grades he obtained, and the final result of the exams, even the result hung on the wall indicating before the student's name "failed". God knew the result with His foreknowledge even before the student went to the exam, however, this foreknowledge of the student's failure did not interfere at all in determining the result of the student. The student reaps the fruit of his negligence, but God's will for the student was that he succeeds with distinction, because God's will is always good.

Let us take another example: God knew in advance that Judas would deliver Christ. He sees Judas chosen by Christ as disciple among the twelve. Although Judas was not yet born, God saw him born, chosen by Christ among the disciples, how he betrayed his Master and conspired with the Jews to kill Him, how he made a deal to deliver Christ to death, how Judas fell in despair and killed himself. Through this clear vision of Judas' life God revealed his destiny and announced it by the mouths of His prophets. To us it is a mere prophecy of future things, but to God it is a revelation of the ever present before God. What we read in the Old Testament about Judas as a prophecy revealed by God on the mouths of His prophets is not so to God. He reveals something He sees in His sight. Nevertheless, this which God revealed was not the impetus for Judas to take this way or do such an act, so he is completely responsible for his behavior.

We can therefore briefly say that God knew in advance that Judas Iscariot would deliver Christ, and that Jacob would act in a good way, but such knowledge was not the reason that made Judas deliver Christ, nor Jacob to be a good person. It is foreknowledge, preceding what happened.

For us there is present, future, and past. We say that something happened in the past, or happening at present, or will happen in the future. We define events according to time, unlike God who has no time for Him. He is beyond time. The future for us is present for Him. And what will happen hundreds or thousands of years afterwards is for God happening. He sees it actually happening. His knowledge of the future things is a vision of these things as if they were occurring at present, as we speak about something we see, or hear, or touch at present. Future things to God are in His sight, in His hearing and touched by Him.

We conclude from all this that God's foreknowledge does not mean that God has determined for somebody to be good or evil, godly or ungodly. God did not create some people for eternal bliss and others for eternal perdition, but He desires that all be saved and accept the knowledge of the truth. It is not God who determines for us our status, whether everlasting bliss or perdition, but we ourselves determine by our own will and choice our status in future. God knows in advance that so and so will be good, but this does not mean that He imposed on that person to be good. Rather God, seeing that this person is good and godly, so He judged him as good, even before he is born! It is because as said before a person who is not yet born is present and existing in God's sight. It is like the knowledge of astrologers about the natural astrological phenomena a long time before they occur. They can know that there will be eclipse of moon or sun, according to scientific calculations. It is the same with God, but incomparably. And as the knowledge of astrologers of the natural phenomena is not the cause of such phenomena, so also God's knowledge about the future of a certain person is not the cause of what he would be in future, whether good or evil.

The election therefore does not mean the determined destiny or God's act, or other concepts not conforming to the Christian spirit and disregarding the human factor, the human freedom and the human will. Such concepts make man helpless, not able to act or to determine his own destiny or future, and not liable to any responsibility or able to assert his independence and freedom.

"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel"

The separation of the Jews from the Messiah and rejection the good things which Christ brought to us, this does not mean as anybody may imagine that the word of God by which He affirmed His promises has lost its effect and is no more of any benefit. The reason is that the true Israelites are not only the natural offspring of Israel according to the flesh.

The word of God here refers to the covenant which God made with Abraham and his descendants, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12: 3) "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Ex 19: 5, 6)

"Nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.'"

They are not Abraham's children because they are his grandchildren and having the right to inherit the promises given to him, but as the Scripture says that in Isaac will be his real grandchildren and

descendants. Isaac is the beginning of the promised offspring and the promised grandchildren.

"That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."

In other words, God's children are not those born according to the flesh, the natural children, but the children who become children according to God's promises. these are the true children who represent the true offspring.

"For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.'"

The apostle here recalls the text in (Gen 18: 10, 14) where the Lord said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son ... Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." These were the words of promise which God uttered announcing to Abraham the birth of Isaac and that he would be the only son and heir to Abraham.

"And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac ..."

Not Sarah alone who gave birth according to the promise, but Rebecca also received the promise from God to have offspring from our father Isaac, for the Scripture says, "Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebecca his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If all is well, why am I like this?' So she went to

inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her: 'Two nations are in your womb; Two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.'" (Gen 25: 21-23)

"For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.'"

Even before Rebecca got children according to God's promise, and before those children did good or evil, the word was that the older, i.e. Esau, would serve the younger, i.e. Jacob. This actually happened for God's word never changes. This divine command or will is mainly based on election, rather on man's deeds. It is based on God's call and predestination. Notice here that the apostle does not degrade the value of deeds for man's salvation, because man will certainly be rewarded according to his deeds. But the apostle meant that God's word never falls (Rom 9: 6), and that God's promises, covenants, and commands will certainly be fulfilled. Even if people were not faithful for what they have been entrusted or did not walk as they ought to, this would not hinder God's purposes and promises.

"As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'"

Actually these promises came true and were fulfilled as we know from Malachi the prophet who said, "'I have loved you,' says the Lord; 'Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' Says the Lord; 'Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.' 'Even though Edom has said, 'We have been impoverished,

but we will return and build the desolate places,' thus says the Lord of hosts: 'They may build, but I will throw down; they shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, 'The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.'" (Mal 1: 2-5)

To sum up all, the apostle Paul started his talk about the election issue by clearly distinguishing between the children according to the flesh and the children according to the promise. He gave examples of those born according to the promise, like Sarah who got children according to the promise, and Rebecca who received the promise from God to have children from our father Isaac.

It is clear from the words of the apostle that God's purpose as said before is based on election, which seems that it has nothing to do with man, as if God chooses freely whoever He chooses and refuses whoever He refuses! But undoubtedly, God foreknew the good which Jacob did and the evil which Esau did. This foreknowledge was the reason of preferring Jacob to Esau, which has nothing to do with the final salvation. Some commentators are of the opinion that this is related to certain events in time, because it is impossible to imagine that God in His complete freedom acts unfairly, not taking into consideration the measures of justice and righteousness. Nevertheless, the apostle appears to emphasize here – without denying the importance of the human deeds and deserts – that God's election of Jacob was not connected with their deservedness, but to God's absolute freedom, by which He can refuse whoever He wants and chooses whoever He wants to choose.

The apostle also when speaking about Jacob and Esau recalls what Malachi mentioned about them, which means that God's promises and covenants concerning Jacob and Esau have been fulfilled in the holy history and its events. They were not fulfilled through partiality, for it the history did not distinguish Jacob out of partiality, but rather we can say that Malachi the prophet found in the history events justifications and assurance of what had been mentioned in the Genesis about preferring Jacob to Esau. So, God's love for Jacob and hatred for Esau were fair and not biased. Therefore Paul the apostle refused the thought that God acted unfairly towards Esau.

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."

If God's election was mainly based on God's call to man, can we say that God was unrighteous or unfair towards Esau? Forbid the thought! Let it never occur to our minds. The Book of Deuteronomy say concerning God's justice, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He." (Deut 32: 4) And the Book of Ezekiel, speaking about God's justice, says, "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways." (Ezek 33: 18-20)

We should be aware that this way of God's dealing regarding Jacob and Esau is the same which He follows with His people. God deals with His people as He wills, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." So, if we inquire whether God dealt unfairly towards Esau, shall we also inquire whether God dealt unfairly towards His people?

Furthermore, if God appears to act according to His own will, we should be aware that God is not only mighty, doing whatever He wills, but He has other attributes in the light of which He acts towards mankind. Can we imagine that God is biased and this makes Him have compassion on Jacob more than on Esau as if He is not fair in dealing with mankind?! And if God says that He has compassion on some, is it possible that He has compassion on those who do not deserve it and does not have compassion on those who deserve it?!

We should understand God's election, not only as an authority on the side of the divine factor, without considering the human factor, for God builds His judgment on people on their acts and deeds. Therefore when the apostle says, "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy," it does not mean the God does not take into consideration the human will or deeds. This reminds us of the words which the apostles said when speaking about the minister and ministry, for he says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." (1 Cor 3: 7) Shall we understand from this verse that God abolished the work of the person who plants and the person who waters? Can any plant grow without somebody to plant it and somebody to water it? Also the work of those is not sufficient, but there should be a power of

increasing, which is from God. The matter needs cooperation of all these factors: the power of increasing, the planting, and the watering. The power of increase is from God, while the planting and watering are from man. The same happens with respect to the salvation and grace from man. Indeed the will and deeds of man are not sufficient because the matter depends on God's mercy. However, does not mean that we delete the value of these deeds and this will, for without them God's mercy will not be given, exactly as without planting and watering the increase will not occur. So, nothing in the verse justifies the misunderstanding of the act of the divine grace, by which some deny the value of the human factor and emphasize only the divine factor.

"For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."

These words mean that God chose Pharaoh and made him king, so that He might show His power through him, and that His name might be declared in all the earth. So, the election of Pharaoh was by a divine dispensation.

However, this does not mean that God's will was to harden Pharaoh's heart so that His power might be shown in him, but the disobedience of Pharaoh was due to Pharaoh himself not to God. We should be sure that God's will is based mainly on His foreknowledge and His justice. Yet this does not mean that God has compassion on those who do not deserve compassion or harden those who do not have this tendency. The apostle here takes it as a natural matter that God's attributes, including justice, righteousness, and goodness, etc., makes it

unreasonable that we ascribe to God any injustice or arbitrary judgment not based on justice.

Therefore to easily understand right the election issue according to Paul the apostle we should go into the motives beyond the words used by the apostle which seem as if he disregards totally the human factor and ascribes the whole matter to God's will.

The Jews denied for God to include the Gentiles in salvation, for in their view, those were not of God's people. The Jews protested against God and opposed His acts, as if they wanted to limit His authority and kingdom! This attitude on the side of the Jews rob God of His absolute authority and power to act according to His own will. So the main issue which Paul the apostle discussed here was: God's power, and whether it is absolute or relative. The Jews denied His absolute power, because they refused including the Gentiles in His people. So what had the apostle to do towards these objections?! Was he to speak about God, limiting His authority, His power, and His acts towards mankind?!

Suppose you want to speak about God and His attributes, would you ascribe to Him a relative attribute, which is not absolute? Shall you not say that God is Almighty, and nothing can limit His authority and might? Undoubtedly we ascribe to God absolute attribute. This is what the apostle Paul did when he wanted to defend God's absolute attributes which accept no limits or boundaries. So he spoke about God who has mercy upon whom He has mercy, and have compassion upon whom He has compassion. Furthermore, when we say that God is Almighty or Omnipotent, this does not mean that His power or might can be distorted by any injustice or oppression. This is because His absolute might and

power are linked with His absolute righteousness, justice, and holiness. His attributes do not conflict with each other. This is what the apostle Paul wanted to emphasize when speaking about God. In view of the falsehood which the Jews held, the apostle had to emphasize to them God's unlimited and absolute power. He is free to have mercy or to show hardness, for nothing curbs His will. On the other side, the apostle also does not disregard man's will and deeds, but he means that when we speak about God we cannot but ascribe to Him the full and absolute power and authority. If we add to these His justice and goodness, we will see that in spite of God's absolute power, He establishes His relationship with man on justice and goodness. God cannot disregard the effort or struggling of man, however, He cannot give blessings to someone who does not deserve them, nor holds His grace from someone who deserves it, merely to practice His absolute authority.

"You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?'"

The apostle Paul imagines that the reader of his epistle or hearer of his teaching would raise this objection: if God hardens whoever He wants, why then will He judge the hardhearted, for who of mankind can resist His will? Again if God has hardened Pharaoh's heart, there is no reason then to judge and condemn him, for Pharaoh was not able to resist His will!

"But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?'"

The apostle Paul denies for man to protest against God's will, asserting that nobody has the right to resist God's will or object to it. The

creation cannot say to its Creator: why did You make me for this purpose not for another, or why did You make me in this form not in another? The apostle Paul says in his Second Epistle to Timothy in this context, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor." (2 Tim 2: 20)

The Lord says on the mouth of Isaiah the prophet, "Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; for shall the thing made say of him who made it, 'He did not make me'? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?" (Isa 29: 16) "Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'? Woe to him who says to his father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to the woman, 'What have you brought forth?'" "That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things." In all these verses the emphasis is laid on God's full and absolute authority which nothing can limit it, and the created human beings cannot object to their Creator. Emphasizing this authority God ascribes to Himself that He created darkness and evil. So regarding this authority it is absolute and unconditional, nevertheless in spite of this He does not act without regard to justice and righteousness.

There is a difference between speaking about God with respect to His divine authority, and speaking about Him with respect to His acts towards mankind. With respect to His divine authority He is not bound by

anything, and with respect to His acts towards mankind He rewards every one according to his deeds, as the apostle says.

"Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"

The apostle compares God's power over mankind to the power of the potter over the clay. Shall we deduce from this that this comparison is meant to emphasize God's absolute power in His relationship with man without any consideration to man's deeds?!

No doubt as the potter has power to make of one lump of clay some vessels for honor and others for dishonor, so also God has the power to choose some people for eternal bliss and others for eternal perdition. But can this be taken to mean that the election is not based on the deserts of mankind and only is done according to a divine will which is not bound by any measures?

Actually the example of the potter does not lead to such a conclusion that denies completely any role of man's deeds or free will. For the potter, though has full power to make of the clay what he wants, whether vessels of honor or dishonor, no doubt the potter does not ignore the kind of the clay. In other words, the kind of the clay determines for the potter which type of vessels he has to do, in spite of his full power to form the clay as he wants.

So, if we speak about God in His dealing with man, we can say that the lump of clay represents mankind, not as created by God, but as He found them. This means that God did not create from the beginning men for perdition and others for bliss, but according to the deeds and behavior

of men He foreknows their destiny. The choice between honor and dishonor is due to the man who makes of himself either a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor. God does not make someone prepared to be a vessel of honor, and another a vessel of dishonor, but man himself who does so.

The whole matter then concerning man's destiny is due to the man himself, what he wants to be. God's election is due to what the man chose for himself, to be a vessel of honor, or a vessel of dishonor. God's will is good, desires that all be saved and accept the knowledge of truth. God desires everybody to be a vessel of honor, for this only conforms to His good will. But if God makes of someone a vessel of dishonor, this will be according to the state of the man who is like the clay which is of no use but for dishonor. God acts with man with full consideration for their will, but man determines what he would be. This human factor or human freedom to determine their will is asserted by the apostle Paul in the words, "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." (2 Tim 2: 21)

The power of the potter is evident in that he is able to form the clay as he wants, for the clay in his hand is submissive, so also God's power over mankind. He does what He desires and they only have to submit without objection. However, in both cases, with respect to the potter and to God, the power is not blind, for when we speak about God's power we should consider His other attributes, i.e. goodness, righteousness, justice, and holiness.

"What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction"

God, while wanting to show His wrath and reveal His power, endured with patience and longsuffering those vessels prepared for destruction.

Notice here that God had not made these vessels to be destroyed, but He endured them. If He had made them He would not have shown His wrath against them. How then can there be any injustice or arbitrary action on the part of God?! The words "show His wrath" may refer in particular to the attitude of Pharaoh, and in general to God's attitude towards those who disobey Him; for they become object of showing His wrath as happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. This reveals how God acts with justice and love towards mankind, and that man has no right to object against any deed of God, for He does not deal arbitrarily or oppressively with anybody. He does not show wrath towards those who do not deserve wrath, and does not have mercy upon those who do not deserve mercy, merely to practice His absolute power.

"... and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory"

If the vessels of wrath are means of showing His wrath, the vessels of mercy are means of showing the riches of His glory. God, to show the riches of His glory and His mercy towards those who deserve this mercy, has prepared by His foreknowledge those vessels to be vessels of mercy not of wrath, "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the

Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1: 26, 27) "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil 4: 19)

"... even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

We are those who He called for glory, for we were not of the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles. God's mercy was not confined to the Jewish people, but extended to the Gentiles also.

"As He says also in Hosea: 'I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved.'"

See then, what Paul the apostle says conforms to what had been uttered by Hosea (v. 2: 23). God was going to call the Gentile His people, who were not His people, and call the church His beloved, whose members also were of the Gentiles, who were still far from His love. Therefore Peter the apostle says, "... who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet 2: 10)

"And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

In the place where the Gentiles worshiped idols, and heard the words, "You are not My people," there they will be called sons of the living God (see Hos 1: 10) due to their faith.

"Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved.'"

Although not all Israel will obtain salvation, some of them who were elected will obtain it. Prophet Isaiah says on this, "And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them, But will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them will return." (Isa 10: 20-22) As for the concept of salvation, it will be explained on the following pages.

"For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.' And as Isaiah said before: 'Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.'"

The apostle Paul speaks about the judgment which God had rendered based on justice, a judgment which must be executed and fulfilled on the earth. The Lord accomplishes His word fully on the earth as Isaiah the prophet spoke about the remnant of Israel who will be saved. If the Lord had not left a seed of Israel, some good elect offspring of their grandchildren, they would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah.

"What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling

stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Here the apostle distinguishes between the end of the Jews and the end of the Gentiles. The Gentiles attained to righteousness, while the Jews did not. This means, as a consequence of all the previous words of the apostle, that God's promises did not lose their power, and that God's word is true and not lying. For the pagan people who had not sought righteousness attained it through faith. Thus God's promises were fulfilled and came true. But Israel who sought righteousness did not attain it because they did not do it in faith but by the works of the law.

The Israelites who had the law, and who wanted to be justified, or to attain righteousness, through keeping the commandments of the law, did not obtain the means leading to righteousness. And due to lack of faith in Christ, they stumbled by the stumbling block. They were like the blind who, in the lack of faith, could not recognize the basic message of Christ. So, Christ for them was the stumbling block as they called Him, for they did not establish their salvation on faith in Christ, but rather rejected Him, and deserved the punishment.

Christ has become for the Jews a stumbling block and a rock of offense as prophet Isaiah said, "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.'" (Isa 28: 16) "He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken." (Isa 8: 14, 15) Peter the apostle likewise says, "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in

Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.' Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed." (1 Pet 2: 6-8) And Simeon the elder in his praise song says, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against." (Lk 2: 34) And Peter the apostle says, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious." (1 Pet 2: 4)

=====+=====

Chapter (10)

The judgment against Israel

Because of their shameful attitude

(Rom 10: 1- 21)

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.' But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' ' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' ' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The

word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.' But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.' But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.' But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'" (Rom 10: 1- 21)

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved."

In the last verses of the preceding chapter, St. Paul mentioned that the Israelites did not attain righteousness because they rejected faith, so

they became far from the way of salvation. This made the apostle Paul deeply grieved in spite of their fault and straying from the right way, because God is not willing that anybody perishes, but that everybody comes to repentance (2 Pet 3: 9). Therefore the desire and prayer of the apostle Paul was that Israel attain salvation, by accepting faith in Christ to be saved.

"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

Although the Jews showed zeal towards God, but they did not direct it properly, for they did not have the complete right information about God and our duties towards Him. This is like the zeal which James and John showed towards Christ concerning His going to Jerusalem, but the Lord Christ refused their zeal because it implied ignorance. St. Luke said, "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.'" (Lk 9: 51-56) Paul the apostle himself before accepting faith on Christ experienced this kind of zeal lacking knowledge. He was unreasonably zealous towards the Jews, to the extent that he persecuted the Christians severely, as he admitted and declared it before the commander of the barracks, according to the writer of the Book of Acts. The apostle Paul said, "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus

of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished." (Acts 22: 3-5)

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."

The Jews were responsible for their straying and deviation, because they insisted to on their ignorance of God's righteousness and obstinately sought to establish their own righteousness, and not submit to the righteousness of God.

The righteousness of God which the apostles mentions here is the righteousness and salvation granted mankind by God's grace out of His mercy and goodness, not as a reward for their deeds. The apostle here makes comparison between the righteousness of God and their own righteousness. The righteousness of God is a free gift by His grace to mankind for their salvation, which has faith as a necessary prerequisite to obtain. So, faith is the means for attaining the righteousness of God, whereas their own righteousness is based on their own deeds or virtues which the Jews used to boast of thinking they are sufficient to bring them righteousness. This made them unaware of their need for God's grace, so they did not submit to God's righteousness. They refused faith in Christ, which as indicated before is the necessary means for obtaining righteousness.

So, the Jews did not feel need for God's mercy, but on the contrary they used to emphasize their virtues, thinking that these are the cause of being worthy of obtaining righteousness. That is why the apostle Paul kept asserting to them their misunderstanding and their wrong obstinacy and drawing their attention to belief in Christ rather than speaking about their righteousness, because belief in Christ is the only means for salvation. He says, "... and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." (Phil 3: 9) Nevertheless the Scriptures indicates that the Jews did not take this right way, but for focusing on their ego they rejected God's counsel. The Lord Christ, speaking about John Baptist, said, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him." (Lk 7: 30) The Lord Christ further addressed the Pharisees saying, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Lk 16: 15) Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, saying: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men - extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Lk 18: 9-14) Likewise, Daniel the prophet, with the spirit of humbleness and feeling of

need to God's mercy rather than for self-righteousness, prayed God, saying, "O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies." (Da 9: 18)

In fact the words of Paul the apostle in this context is the best message addressed to the world in our present times, because the most serious disease befalling humanity at present is the absolute self-confidence and trusting of one's capabilities and powers. Man no more seeks salvation by looking to heaven and waiting for God's mercy, and no more cares about faith, but rather they turned their sights from heaven to the earth, from God to man, and from faith to science. Man deceives himself that he is able to attain salvation and obtain happiness through his deeds and achievements, so he turned his faith in God to faith in oneself and one's powers.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

If the Jews were seeking to obtain righteousness and salvation, they had to turn their eyes away from relying on their own works and virtues, which are represented in the requirements of the law, and to turn to faith in Christ. The law actually was not given to grant salvation and righteousness, but to prepare mankind to accept faith in Christ, who alone grants righteousness depending on faith. The apostle Paul explains this, saying, "For Christ is the end of the law." This means that the law was not an end in itself, and the required salvation was not linked to the law except in that the law was given to prepare mankind to believe in Christ. So, faith in Christ was the end and fulfillment of the law. through the Lord

Christ righteousness became possible to attain, for it does not depend on the law as the Jews thought. If the Jews had understood correctly the nature of the law and its end, they would have accepted faith in Christ, and not taken the law as an end in itself but rather a means of faith in Christ, for in this faith the end and fulfillment of the law are accomplished. That is why the apostle addressed the Israelites in Antioch of Pisidia, saying, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13: 38, 39)

The law, faith and justification

"For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.'"

In this verse and the following verses the apostle indicates why salvation is linked to faith rather than to the law. He says that righteousness based on the law is difficult to realize, because it depends on fulfilling the commandments, statutes, and judgments of the law, as the Book of Leviticus says, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them." (Lev 18: 5) Nevertheless fulfilling the requirements of the law is not an easy thing, as the apostle Paul says in the Epistle to the Galatians: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'" (Here the apostle emphasizes that justification is realized through faith, because those who rely on the law are exposed to curse for failing to fulfill its requirements.) "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.'" (This affirms that justification by the law is impossible for

the law itself says that the just lives by faith.) "Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." (This means that the righteousness which the law promises is not based on faith but on keeping its commandments and statutes. So, as man is unable to fulfill them he will be under the curse of the law, which further means that our attachment to the law leads us to the expectation of the curse not the expectation of justification and salvation.) (Gal 3: 10-12)

"But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?''(that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'"

After the apostle had asserted the impossibility of attaining justification by means of the law, he asserted on the other side that it is possible by faith. The apostle Paul supports his teaching concerning justification by faith not by the law by the Old Testament texts and in particular by the words of Moses the Prophet. Moses the prophet as said before indicated the difficulties facing attaining justification through the law, and clarified that salvation is possible through faith. He said, "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea

for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deut 30: 11-14)

So, through faith we attain justification and salvation. We should not raise difficulties concerning the possibility of realizing it, to say for instance, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above to give us salvation), for attaining salvation does not require that someone ascends into heaven or bring down Christ from heaven. Although we are on the earth, we are able through faith to unite with Christ, and by this the action and effectiveness of His grace will be fulfilled in us. Also to attain salvation it is not necessary to descend into the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead that He may give us justification and life. Therefore salvation does not require anything except faith in the Lord Christ and confessing that God has raised Him from the dead.

The apostle further says, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness," which means that if we believe with our hearts on Jesus we will obtain righteousness as a fruit of this faith. "And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" the apostle says, which means that we will obtain salvation if we confess through this faith, for whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

Salvation is not confined to one people and not to another, for there is no distinction between a Jew and a Greek. God is the Lord of all, not

only of the Jews. He gives saving gifts to whoever calls on His name, as Joel the prophet says, "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls." (Joel 2: 32)

On the generality of salvation St. Peter the apostle, speaking in the Book of Acts before Cornelius, said, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for ... In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ - He is Lord of all." (Acts 10: 28-36) And in another part of the Book of Acts, Peter the apostle again said, "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith ... But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." (Acts 15: 7-11) And James the apostle likewise said, "Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things.'" (Acts 15: 13-17)

The Jews refuse the word

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

The Israelites went far away from salvation and could not attain righteousness, because to be justified and saved they had to call upon the name of the Lord, because whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how could they call on the name of the Lord Jesus whom they had not believed? (Heb 11: 6) And how could they believe on Him whom they had not heard of? And how could they hear without somebody to preach them?

With these words the apostle justifies the need for preaching. So, if we want the Gentiles to believe on Christ Jesus, we have to prepare for them preachers to preach the name of the Lord to them. With these words also the apostle justifies the apostolic ministry for calling the world to believe on Christ.

- See the gradual steps from the higher to the lower:
 - Do you want to be saved? You have to call on the name of the Lord.
 - Do you want to call on the name of the Lord? You have to believe in Him, because who comes to God must believe that He exists (Heb 1: 6)
 - Do you want to believe in the Lord? You have to hear the word preached.

- Do you want to hear the preaching? There should be a preacher who preaches on the name of the Lord.

"And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'"

How can a preacher succeed in preaching unless sent by God?! This sending for preaching is done according to the prophecy on the mouth of Isaiah the prophet: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isa 52: 7) And Paul the apostle, speaking about his preaching, says, "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain." (Gal 1: 1, 2) Indeed, how beautiful are the feet of them who proclaim peace, the peace which is realized between God and mankind by the blood of Christ! How beautiful are those feet bringing good tidings of blessings given us by the Lord Christ! They proclaim our freedom from the captivity of sin and proclaim prevalence of peace. The feet of those preachers are seen beautiful by the people, because they bring them the good tidings of heavenly and spiritual good things long waited for by mankind. As the prophecy of Nahum says, "Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off." (Nah 1: 15)

"But they have not all obeyed the gospel; For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"

Although God has sent those who preach on His name, not all responded; not all accepted the good tidings of salvation. This lack of faith had been well known from olden times, for Isaiah prophesied on the mouths of the preachers sent by God, saying, "Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Isa 53: 1) This reveals that a few only believed the word which those had preached. This also is indicated by St. John in his gospel, saying, "But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'" (Jn 12: 37-40)

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

So, we can conclude from all this with the fact that faith is born, realized, proclaimed, and spread by hearing the preaching. The subject of preaching is God's word, for preaching aims at proclaiming God's word and making it known to everybody, as the Lord said, "for those who will believe in Me through their word." (Jn 17: 20)

"But I say have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.'"

Did the Jews hear the word of God? certainly they heard, because the voice of the preachers of the good tidings of salvation has gone out to

all the earth, and their preaching reached the ends of the world (see also Ps 19: 4)

"But I say did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.'"

The evidence that Israel heard the word of preaching is that the prophets of the Old Testament had spoken about the hardheartedness of the Israelites. The apostle mentioned among them Moses, who spoke the words of the Lord in (Deuteronomy 32: 21). He mentioned that God spoke to Israel and indicated that they would be filled with jealousy to the extent of anger, because God was going to have mercy upon the Gentiles and honor and accept them, and it is well known that the Jews hated the Gentiles. The Lord therefore said, "They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation." (Deut 32: 21)

"But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.'"

Isaiah the prophet, an Israelite, disdained the idolaters, but he dared say on the mouth of the Lord that He (the Lord) became the true God for the Gentiles who had not sought Me, and became manifest to those who had not asked for Me because they had not known Me. The words of Isaiah the prophet in his prophecy say: "I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation that was not called by My name." (Isa 65: 1)

"But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'" (Rom 10: 1- 21)

Though Isaiah the prophet praised the state of the Gentiles concerning their relationship with God, he was sad because of the state of the Israelites and how they became. God, being a jealous and merciful Father stretched His hand to embrace this people, but the Israelites did not believe in the Lord Christ nor accepted His words. So He said He stretched His hands to a disobedient and contrary people, because they rebelled and took an evil way following their own thoughts.

=====+=====

Chapter (11)

The future of the Jews regarding salvation

What did salvation mean to the Jews

(Rom 11: 1-36)

"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life'? But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but

the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.' And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.'" (Rom 11: 1-10)

General Introduction

St. Paul the apostle described Israel in the preceding Chapter as a disobedient and contrary people. In the present Chapter, the apostle discusses the future of the Jews with regard to salvation. But this Chapter is misused, for some western theologians who support the aggressive attitudes of Israel claim that the apostle Paul was speaking about the Jews restoring their early status as God's elect people. They use the teachings of Paul the apostle to give religious support satisfying the aggressive spirit of Israel. Therefore we had to draw the attention before proceeding into our commentary on this Chapter to the fact that the apostle Paul was not speaking about God's mercy upon the Israelite people as a nation having an independent physical entity. The continuity of Israel as a nation or a state has never occurred to the mind of Paul the apostle, and does not conform at all to the spiritual concepts of the Christian teachings. the status of Israel as a nation or a state has come to an end in the biblical concept. Moreover, the status of Israel as a religion also has come to an end. The Christian church replaced the Jewish church, and the Christian religion replaced the Jewish religion. Therefore the hope of which Paul the apostle speaks in this Chapter does not concern the Jewish people as a nation, but as individuals. It is because the door of salvation and faith in the Lord Christ is open before every individual of mankind, whether a

Jew or not. No people are distinguished than another people, nor an individual than another. It is not confined to one nation only, but it is rather God's gift offered to all people.

So, if Paul the apostle says that God did not refuse His people whom He foreknew, but their hardheartedness happened partially until the fullness of the Gentiles join faith, then all Israel will be saved, by this he does not refer to their salvation as a nation but as individuals. In other words he does not speak about the material concept of salvation, which is represented in our present time in establishing a usurping state that is built on robbing the rights of the other. He rather is speaking about the spiritual concept of salvation represented in accepting the Lord Christ as Savior to mankind, and believing on Him. From this side, there is opportunity for the Jews to believe in Christ and be saved, in which case any claim by the Jews of their right to establish a state for themselves will be null and void. Christianity does not attach the faithful to an earthly kingdom or an earthly state, but to a heavenly kingdom and a heavenly inheritance that does not fade away.

"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."

Paul the apostle wonders, has God refused His people? Has He shut the door of salvation before whoever of the Jews desired to believe in Him? And if God has refused the Jews as a nation which held fast to the , Moses' law as the sole means of salvation, would God reject any Jew who denies his Jewish faith and recognize the true concept of salvation and accept and believe in Christ as Savior? Does not anyone of mankind have the right to believe in Christ? The apostle Paul affirms that God does not cast away His people but opens all the time a door of salvation for them.

Samuel the prophet said to the people, "For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people ... Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart ..." (1 Sam 12: 22-24) And David the prophet says, "For the Lord will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance." Ps 94: 14)

The apostle Paul presented himself as evidence that God never shut the door of salvation before whoever of the Jews desired to believe. Paul the apostle was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, and in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians he asserted that he belonged to the Israelites, saying, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I." (2 Cor 11: 22) And in his Epistle to the Philippians he said, "... circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews." (Phil 3: 5) So, it is not proper to say that God shuts the door of salvation before any person who desires to believe, because Paul the apostle whom God called to be an apostle for preaching His good tidings was an Israelite, of the tribe of Benjamin. If God had deprived the Jews of the grace of believing in Christ, there would have not been any reason for choosing Paul the apostle for preaching on the name of Christ.

"God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life'? But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

The apostle Paul presented another evidence, that God did not refuse His people whom He foreknew and who lay their hope at present on the promises of the past, what happened in the days of Elijah the prophet. Elijah saw only the dark image of God's people who became murderers of the prophets, pulled down the altars, and were seeking Elijah to kill him. But the divine inspiration indicated to Elijah that some of God's people had not yet fallen a prey of straying, for God has reserved for Himself seven thousand knees who had not bowed to Baal. So, what happened in the past may happen at any time, and as God had reserved for Himself seven thousand men, also at present God may reserve a remnant according to the election of His grace. This phrase indicates that such a remnant has obtained justification as a gift from God. This fact is explained by the apostle in the following verses:

"And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."

So, if this remnant had been elected according the grace, it means that the election was not as a reward for works. Otherwise the grace would have lost its characteristic as grace, and the gift would not have been for free, and moreover, the gift would have been given to mankind undeservedly. Also if the election for this remnant had been for good works they had done, the grace would no longer be grace, for in this case they would receive the reward of their works, not as a free gift.

So then, if the salvation of Israel was based on faith, what was the stand of Israel concerning the call for salvation? The apostle Paul says:

"What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

What is the thing which Israel sought but did not attain? The apostle referred to this in Chapter (9) of the present Epistle, saying, "Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness." (Rom 9: 31) This means that Israel missed the opportunity of benefiting from God's promises by seeking to be justified by the works of the law without faith in Christ. Nevertheless, some Israelites believed in Christ and obtained this justification; those are the elect from among the Israelites, the rest who are not elected, became hardhearted or blinded due to lack of faith. They lost the grace of salvation by faith.

"Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.' And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.'"

This hardheartedness which the Jews demonstrated suddenly towards the Israelites by refusing to believe in Him, had been mentioned by the prophets of the Old Testament. Therefore the apostle referred to the words spoken on the mouth of Moses the prophet in Deuteronomy, and those on the mouth of Isaiah the prophet. Moses the prophet speaking about the hardheartedness of the Israelites as revealed always in the spirit of suspicion and doubt and lack of faith in spite of the great words done by the Lord for them, said, "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land - the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive

and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day. And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God. And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us to battle, and we conquered them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh." (Deut 29: 2-8) Actually the works done by the Lord Christ for the Jews and in front of them were not less than God's works for them in the Old Testament, but with the same spirit of obstinacy, doubt and suspicion they refused to believe in the Lord Christ.

And the prophet Isaiah said, "For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers. The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, 'Read this, please.' And he says, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.'" (Isa 29: 10-12)

These words of Isaiah the prophet were quoted or referred to by the apostle Paul to assert the spirit of stupor and insensibility which the people had, which made them not affected by the word of God preached to them. This was due to their hardheartedness and the spirit of obstinacy and resistance to faith. But we should not take the words of the apostle "God has given them the spirit of stupor" to mean that God was the cause of their straying, for this was totally due to them. As for the words, "eyes that they should not see," they mean that the eyes of this people though have apparent sight and see God's works they do not comprehend their

meaning and significance. The same goes for the words, "ears that they should not hear," they mean that they hear God's words, but like any deaf person, they do not understand – even unto the present day – the meaning and significance of God's words.

Again the apostle Paul refers to the words of David the prophet: "Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap." (Ps 69: 22) The table here refers to the slackness of the Jews and their being convinced with the law and its contents, relying on the worship deeds. These deeds would be for them a snare and a trap, for they would be exposed to punishment. The law will be the cause of judging and condemning them. Then at the end of this part of the words of the apostle about the Jews, he says, "Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." The apostle here refers to the same Psalm where David the prophet says, "Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually." (Ps 69: 23) It means that darkness overshadow the minds so they will not understand, but will be under the slavery of sin, i.e., the sin of lack of faith, which burdens them.

The call to the Jews to believe in Christ

"I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is

the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For if the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.' Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.' Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may

obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?' 'Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?' For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen." (Rom 11: 11-36)

A General Introduction

If God has rejected Israel as a nation or a state, and if the salvation which the apostle Paul spoke about as said before does not concern the Jews as a state, but as individuals, so the call is addressed to each and every Jew to return from straying and accept faith in Christ. This is the only door of salvation open for every individual of mankind, whether a Jew or not. Therefore we would repeat what we have said and emphasized that Israel as a nation, a church, or a religion has no existence according to the biblical concept. Furthermore the words of the apostle Paul about the salvation of Israel concern Israel as individuals, not as a state. Based on this understanding, blindness as expressed by the apostle Paul has occurred in part to Israel until the fullness of Gentiles accepts faith. Then all Israel will be saved as it is written, "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom 11: 25, 26)

"I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."

Though the Israelites bear all the responsibility for the sin of rejecting faith, they did not stumble that they should remain falling with no hope of rising. But the fall was to provoke their jealousy when they see the Gentiles advanced to attain salvation and the inheritance of the kingdom. Seeing this, they would try again to return and seek faith in Christ. The fall therefore can be a cause and impetus for raising jealousy within the Israelites to feel their fault and the losses incurred due to rejecting faith. So they would try to rise from their fall, especially after seeing the gentiles – who were not of God's people – have attained the righteousness which the Israelites had sought and did not attain. God actually had warned them in the Old Testament, as in the Book of Deuteronomy: "And when the Lord saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said: 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith. They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.'" (Deut 29: 19-21)

In this way Paul and Barnabas addressed the Jews publicly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." (Acts 13: 46-48)

"Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!"

God's word is certainly fruitful and never returns void. So when the Jews rejected faith in Christ and closed the door of salvation before themselves, God's word went to the Gentiles and preaching bore fruit, for many believed. But though the faith of the Gentiles came due to the unbelief of the Jews, and though the fall of the Jews and their failure were riches for the world and the Gentiles, it would be better and more useful if the Jews believed in Christ, or rather if faith spread among all mankind. If the fall of Israel brought fruit to the world, and their failure in the spiritual life have caused many gifts to the Gentiles, how much rather if all the Jews, with all their numbers, believe! This would be a cause of multiple blessings and many gifts.

"For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry."

The apostle Paul assured the Christians from the Gentiles that his views about the Jews would not make him forget his responsibility for the Gentiles, because he had been appointed to preach to the Gentiles. He therefore magnified his ministry and did his best so that it might be fruitful.

"... if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them."

The apostle here expresses his hope that his ministry to the Gentiles and his attempts to attract many of the idolaters would provoke the jealousy of the Israelites. So, in this way, through his preaching to the Gentiles and their conversion the opportunity would be available to

provoke his relatives the Israelites that they might move towards seeking salvation in Christ.

"For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

If the rejection of the Jews and their refusal of faith had become a cause for the reconciliation of the world with God, how much rather would their acceptance of faith?! It would be life and spiritual rising from the dead to all, Jews and Gentiles. had the Jews accepted faith as the Gentiles did, the number of the faithful would have increased, comprising the Jews and the Gentiles together, and consequently the number of those who rise from the death by sin.

"For if the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches."

With these words the apostle Paul expresses his hope that the Jews accept faith in the Lord Christ. For if the fathers and prophets of the Jews, whose example and steps they follow, had lived a holy life consecrated for God and obtained the blessing, so the lump – i.e. the whole Jewish nation – was appointed to be holy. And if the root, that is, the patriarchs of the Jews had been holy, the branches also of the root, that is, the Israelites, were to be holy.

"And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you."

The apostle here is addressing the Gentiles, saying: if some branches (referring to the Jews) were broken off due to lack of faith and were separated from the holy root, and you (the Gentiles) who had been before like a wild unfruitful tree was grafted in the original tree and partake of its root and fatness, you must not boast of that. He refers here to the fact that the Gentiles had been in the beginning fruitless, for not being of God's people, but they joined and became members of the one church. The apostle Paul speaking of this in his Epistle to the Ephesians, says, "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Un-circumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation ... Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God ..." (Eph 2: 11-14, 19)

So, the Gentiles must not disdain the branches that had been broken off. The apostle Paul speaks to the Gentile, saying, if you want to boast you have to remember that you are not the root, and you do not support the root, that is, you do not feed it, but the opposite. It is the root that supports you, for you partake of its fatness. In other words, if you now enjoy the divine and heavenly blessings, it is due to the root in which you had been grafted, the fathers whom you joined. They have the credit for the blessings which you have obtained (see Jn 4: 22)

It appears from the words of the apostle Paul that some Christians of Gentile origin used to disdain the Jews.

"You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.' Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear."

The apostle continues speaking to the Gentile, saying, if you take as justification for boasting that the branches were broken off that you may have a place, then you were grafted in the blessed tree, so then it is true. The branches were broken off for unbelief, but on the other hand, you were not grafted in the tree for your deeds or personal deservedness, but only for your belief. So you have to be aware and not boast, but rather be humble and afraid, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor 10: 12)

"For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either."

If God punished the original natural branches (the Israelites) by breaking them off, you as Gentile should fear lest you also be exposed to have your branches broken off, especially that you are not natural branches.

"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off."

Instead of boasting and feeling haughty, the apostle is still speaking to the Gentile, you have to understand and be aware how God acts towards mankind, and how He reveals His severity sometimes and His goodness and mercy in other times. His severity was for those who refuse

faith, and His goodness was for you, the Gentile, provided that you continue steadfast in faith to deserve it, otherwise you also will be broken off. The Lord Christ says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit ... Abide in Me, and I in you ... If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." (Jn 15: 2-6) The apostle Paul further says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end." (Heb 3: 14)

"And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again."

Those Jews who were broken off, if they do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted in again in the blessed tree, for God is able to do this for them.

We should not lose hope in the possibility of the restoration of the straying to faith, for there is always a place in the bosom of the divine mercy. God accepts the repentance of the sinner and restores him to his original position which he lost due to sin.

"For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

The apostle, addressing the Gentile, says God is able to graft them (the Jews) again, for if you the Gentile were cut out of the wild unfruitful tree and contrary to your nature you were grafted in a new fruitful olive

tree, how much more for those who are by nature branches of the original tree! Those also will be grafted in their own tree or olive tree of which they were originally branches.

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."

The apostle refers here to a fact that had been hidden then was revealed by God to the apostles concerning the coming salvation of the Jews. God wanted the Gentiles to know this fact and to know this mystery lest they think themselves wise and disdain the Israelites for being branches cut out of the tree and are to perish. This mystery which the apostle revealed indicates that the hard-heartedness of the Israelites were only in part of them, until the fullness of Gentiles appointed for faith accept this faith and join the kingdom of Christ.

Notice here the meaning of the following phrases:

- **This mystery:** This word refers to something that had been hidden and was revealed. Without such divine revelation no human mind could have recognized it, as evident from the following verses:
 - "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew." (1 Cor 2: 7, 8)
 - "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor 15: 51)
 - "By revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which

in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel."

- "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh." (1 Tim 3: 16)

The conversion of the Israelites to faith in Christ was called a mystery, because the state of the Israelites at the time of their conversion does not give any hint to the human mind of such conversion. It may seem to anybody as something unexpected and impossible. But as the Gentiles' acceptance of faith was a mystery (Eph 3: 3-6), so also will it be for the Israelites. Their conversion to faith will be a mystery, for that which is not possible with people, will be possible with God.

- **The fullness of the Gentiles:** This means the full number of the Gentiles who had been appointed by God for salvation and conversion to faith in Christ. So, this phrase refers to the Gentiles who were to believe.
- **Blindness in part has happened to Israel:** So, not all of them will be exposed to severity but only part of them.

"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob'"

The words "And so" mean when the condition referred to in the preceding verse will be realized, that is, the fullness of the Gentiles come in to faith. Those of Israel who will believe will be saved as we read in the Book of prophet Isaiah, "The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord." (Isa 59: 20)

And David the Prophet says, "Oh that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad." (Ps 14: 7)

And Jeremiah the prophet says, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke ... says the Lord." (Jer 31: 32) For the Lord says to them, blaming, "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Heb 8: 8) (See also Heb 10: 16).

"For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

Taking away the sins is the basis of all blessings, gifts and good things of the New Testament. This indicates on the other side that the sins were the basis of all the misery that had befallen man, and that had created that enmity between man and God.

"Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers."

Concerning the gospel the Jews by unbelief had become enemies, so that the Gentiles would enter in the kingdom of the Messiah, which kingdom the Jews thought to be their own, so they shut it or tried to shut in the face of the Gentiles. But concerning their election which God had prepared for them a long time ago they are beloved for the sake of the fathers of whom they are ancestors: "But because the Lord loves you, and

because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." (Deut 7: 8, 9) Not for your righteousness and equity of heart that God let you enter and take their land, but to fulfill His oath to your father, "The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day." (Deut 10: 15)

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

God cannot be deceived or misled when electing, calling or giving. So He never regrets for the gifts He promised to give or waive a calling He made. "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent; for He is not a man that He should relent." (1 Sam 15: 29) "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Num 23: 19) "Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." (Heb 6: 17, 18)

- **God's gifts:** These are mentioned in (Chapter 9) of the Epistle to the Romans, "... who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises." (Rom 9: 4)

- **His call:** This is the call extended by God to the Jewish nation. The apostle here is not speaking about an earthly nation for Israel but for the call to the Jews for faith in Christ.

"For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy."

The words here also are addressed to the Gentiles: you should not wonder that God's promises and gifts will certainly be fulfilled, because you, the Gentiles had been called by God before Abraham was called. But at that time, you refused the call and worshiped the idols, but now you have obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews and you were accepted in the circle of the faith. The same applies to the Jews, for now they are disobedient and do not believe the gospel, so that you may obtain mercy through the mercy shown you. But in Verse (31) the words "that they may" do not mean that the Jews had to obey so that they may obtain mercy, but they mean a comparison between the state of the Jews and that of the Gentiles. The Gentiles, before their salvation and becoming members of God's kingdom, they obtained mercy after they had shown unbelief and were subject to God's rejection. The same happens to Israel, they will obtain mercy when they accept faith and show obedience, although they had not been rejected for their disobedience. So, the words "they will obtain mercy through the mercy shown you" mean that they will obtain mercy in the same way you have obtained mercy. Therefore the words "they were disobedient that they may obtain mercy" do not mean that God imposed upon the Jews disobedience, but it is only a way of expression by which the author wanted to ascribe to God all that occurs in the world, being Himself the First Cause of everything, without

prejudicing man's freedom. God gives weight to this freedom and includes it in His divine plan and dispensation.

"For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all."

The unbelief of the Gentiles was in the beginning, and now the unbelief of the Jews, because God willed to call both of them together in their state of disobedience so that He may show His mercy on all.

But we should always remember what we have repeatedly mentioned, that God is not the cause of the disobedience of mankind or of their rebelling. So, when it is said that God has committed all to disobedience, this does not mean that He was the cause, but means that when man disobeys by his own will and choice, God will take away His mercy from him. The apostle Paul therefore says in the Epistle to the Galatians, "But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." (Gal 3: 22) And in the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle says, "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.'" (Rom 3: 9-12)

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

How rich is God's goodness that cannot be comprehended! How deep is His wisdom by which He controls all things and manages all

events to fulfill their purpose! How deep and rich is God's knowledge who knows in advance by His foreknowledge the end and purpose of all things and all matters!

On the other hand, it is hard for anybody to understand God's judgments and recognize how He makes everything go and takes the way that realizes salvation for mankind, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Cor 1: 21-25) "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor 2: 7, 8)

"... 'For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?' 'Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?'"

Who can know the thoughts and will of God? And who can be the counselor of God the God of heavens? Who has given or lent God something for which he may be entitled to receive a reward for it? And if God has taken away His mercy from Israel, Israel has no right to ask God for anything as if He were indebted to him or committed to give him His good things and blessings.

Isaiah the prophet says, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?" (Isa 40: 13, 14)

And Jeremiah the prophet says, "For who has stood in the counsel of the Lord, and has perceived and heard His word?" (Jer 23: 18) And the apostle Paul says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." (1 Cor 2: 11)

"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Of Him: refers to the fact that God created everything.

Through Him: indicates that God keeps His creation and rules them with His wisdom.

To Him: means that all creation works for the glory of God.

To whom be glory: glory is given to God forever to the end of ages.

=====+=====

The Practical Section (the life of a true believer) (Rom 12: 1- 16: 27)

**Commandments to be obeyed by
Whoever seeks to have a true Christian life
(Rom 12: 1- 15: 13)**

Chapter (12)

Exchanged duties among the Christians (Rom 12: 1-21)

Introduction (Rom 12: 1-2)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

We ought to walk as meet for these gifts which we have received from God. This means that in return for God's mercy we should present our bodies as living holy sacrifice, and to use the members of our bodies totally for good works not for sinful deeds. The living and holy sacrifice required to be presented is the sacrifice of worship which we offer by our minds which obtained the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

We notice here that such worship that we should present to God should be presented by all our bodies, souls and spirits. It is not worship by the body only, but spiritual reasonable worship revealed in the body. The body takes part in this worship by presenting its members to be tools of righteousness not of transgression. Man as a whole should take part in worshipping God (spiritual reasonable and physical worship). Peter the apostle says, "... to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 2: 5) And David the prophet says, "Offer to God thanksgiving." (Ps 50: 14) (See also Rom 6: 13, 16, 19)

- **By the mercies of God:** Notice here these words refer to the mercy, which is one of God's attributes in dealing with mankind. He has dealt with us with all mercy and compassion, as the apostle

Paul says in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation." (2 Cor 1: 3, 4)

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

- The words "do not be conformed to this world" mean that we should not behave like those materialists whose care is only in the worldly things. So, in order to succeed in offering our bodies spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, we should not do like the worldly people or be conformed to their form.
- The words "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind": transformation can be accomplished by renewing of the mind. This means replacing the old thoughts of the old man by the Christian spiritual thoughts and behavior. What happens is not a change in the nature of the mind, but in its characteristics. Notice that the apostle in the preceding verse spoke about renewing of the bodies by consecrating them. Here also he speaks about the renewing of the mind. The mind in its natural state away from faith is fleshly mind (Col 2: 18). However, in order that the mind be renewed it needs enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, by which one can know what is good. The Holy Spirit enlightens the inner sight, cleanses motives, sanctifies purposes, renews the heart, and puts all man's powers under His guidance and control. by this a person becomes no more as before but becomes a new man, with everything in him new.

- That you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God: That is to know and discern what conforms with God's will, which is good and leads man to the moral perfection (see Phil 1: 10). Our renewed minds will be able to find out what God's will is, and consequently find out God's goodness and perfect will. By this we can walk on the way of the spiritual and moral perfection, "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor 3: 18) "... and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph 4: 22, 23)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor 5: 17)
Indeed, God's will is good, perfect, and acceptable to Him.

Duties of the Faithful in the Christian Community

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one

another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

The apostle Paul spoke about transformation and renewing of the mind, and here he speaks about new interests and new morals bearing the characteristics of such transformation and renewal. These should organize the relationship between a believer and other believers in the Christian Community. The apostle speaks according to the gift of enlightenment given him for the apostolic ministry entrusted to him. He addresses everybody warning them lest anybody have self-interest and self-estimation more than he ought to have. A person ought think of himself and judge himself according to the gifts, talents and grace given each one. Talents and gifts are not given to be a cause or a motive for wrong

boasting, but for the benefit of the others and for the benefit of the church as a whole. The apostle Paul therefore says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Cor 4: 6, 7) And the Lord Christ in the Parable of the Talents says, "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability" (Mt 25: 15) Again the apostle Paul says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." (1 Cor 12: 11) "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." (Eph 4: 7) "We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us – a sphere which especially includes you." (2 Cor 10: 13)

Now notice the following phrases, what they mean:

- **The grace given to me:** Here the apostle Paul refers to the power of the word which he preaches, for he speaks by the grace given to him. He means the grace of the apostolic ministry which gave him the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.
- **Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think:** He means that nobody should think of himself with more estimation than he ought to think, or magnify himself, or be haughty in estimating his abilities and powers. One ought to act according to the amount of gifts, talents, or grace given to him by God.

- **As God has dealt to each one a measure of faith:** This means that through faith we obtain God's gifts, and according to the measure of our faith the gifts are given to us ¹

"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

As the body has many members, and each has a different function, so also are the faithful in the church. They are many but one body because of their unity with Christ. Each works for the other, the same as the members of the body serve one another. If so, we ought to serve humbly, not looking to ourselves, nor taking our gifts as object of self-boasting, but for the service of the body of the church. The apostle Paul says in this context in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ ... For in fact the body is not one member but many ... But now indeed there are many members, yet one body." (1 Cor 12: 12-20)

Now see what the following phrases mean:

- **For as we have many members in one body:** (1 Cor 12: 12, 13; Eph 4: 15; Col 1: 18) through this comparison the apostle Paul affirms the relationship among themselves in one body, and affirms his teaching about love. Each member of the body works for the benefit of the whole body. Each member has its own function, but the function of each is for the benefit of all members and all the body. Each member assists the other members.

¹ See our book: "Faith in the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle", (1976), p. 17

- **But all the members do not have the same function:** As the function of each member differs from the function of the other members, so also the Holy Spirit has given the faithful different gifts and talents.
- **So we, being many, are one body in Christ:** All the faithful compose one body. God is our Father, and Christ is the center of our unity, the head of all, and the new root that gives life to all. The faithful in this world are no mere multitude, but they have to unite in one group with Christ as the Head, and have to act with the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- **And individually members of one another:** It does not mean that the small member works for the senior, but rather the senior also works for the small. We are not the whole thing, but we are mere members not the whole body. We are members, not only of Christ, but also of each other. We exist in a close relationship with each other, and we are committed to do what is good for the other, for the sake of the whole body, for its good and growth. So, if each one ought not to think more highly than he ought to think so that no division might happen among the faithful nor one prevails over the rights of the other, also on the other hand, we have to feel our responsibility towards the whole body. We have to contribute to serving it with all the gifts and talents we have, and not degrade our talents or look down upon ourselves as if we were useless or of no benefit. And if extremism in estimating our abilities is rejected, so also disdaining one's own talent or gift even so small is rejected, because this leads to failure to feel our responsibility towards the others.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith"

We have different abilities and powers according to the grace of the Holy Spirit given us, so we have to be satisfied and let not selfishness and self-love arise within us because of the gifts not given to us. If any of us has the gift of prophecy, let him prophesy in proportion to the extent of gift given to him according to the degree of his faith.

Now let us see what the following phrases mean:

- **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:** In this chapter seven gifts are mentioned, namely: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, liberal giving, leading with diligence, and showing mercy with cheerfulness.

And in Chapter 12 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, nine gifts are mentioned: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues. (See 1 Cor 12: 8-10; 12: 28-31)

However, this number of gifts may increase according to the needs of the church. The apostle Paul referred to the different gifts, without dividing them into great or small gifts. The church needs all gifts, and any gift even a small one has its value and its importance for the whole body.

- **If prophecy:** By prophecy is meant the gift of revealing the hidden things. Through prophecy the heavenly mysteries and the future events are revealed to mankind, especially to the faithful. This includes interpretation of the biblical prophecies an interpretation that cannot be attained by normal interpretation rules.

- **In proportion to our faith:** This means that each one is responsible for or the cause of the extent of grace one obtains, whether great or small. A gift is not given to a believer except according to his readiness, and only if it finds the believer capable of accepting it.

"Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching"

Each believer should act according to the gift given to him, and whoever has the gift of church ministry shall practice it. And whoever has the gift of teaching the divine truth shall practice it, and shall seek to interpret God's revelations inspired to His prophets, and the divine truths included in them. Now see what the following phrases mean:

- **Or ministry, let us use it in our ministering:** The word "ministry" may be used in its general meaning, or, most probably, to refer to a certain ministry in the church, because the apostle here is speaking about different gifts.
- **He who teaches, in teaching:** It is not the task of the teacher to reveal new revelations, for this is the function of the prophet. The task of a teacher is confined to explaining the already revealed revelations, or the revealed truths, and comprehending them more thoroughly and deeply.

In all cases a believer should confine himself to his gift and not go beyond it to another gift.

"He who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness"

- **He who exhorts:** This is the person who has the gift of giving advice to the others, and guiding them to virtue and motivating them to act according to the divine truths.
- **He who gives, with liberality:** By this is meant a person who is ready to give voluntarily his good things to the poor and the needy, without being compelled by others. Such a person does not act by selfish motives, but gives with liberality and love.
- **He who leads:** This is the person who is entrusted with leadership. Such a person should lead well, with all enthusiasm and diligence.
- **He who shows mercy:** This is the person who shows mercy upon the others. This act on his side should be with pleasure, satisfaction, and cheerfulness.

Here we also would indicate the following:

1. He who exhorts (parakalwn), is the one who exhorts for virtue. He is different from the teacher, for the latter addresses the mind, while the preacher addresses the heart and the will and motivates them to act according to the sound teaching. These two gifts may not exist in one person, so the church needs some for preaching, and others for teaching. As a preacher aims at motivating people for virtuous conduct, he should have some advices and guidelines for the believer to fulfill. So the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says, "I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation" (Heb 13: 22)

However, by exhortation sometimes is meant comforting and strengthening in times of tribulation: "that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (2 Cor 1: 4) "I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation." (2 Cor 7: 4)

2. By the giver here is not meant the giving service organized by the church, for the latter the term used is "dididomai". But in the present verse the term used is "metadidou", which indicates personal giving from the heart.

"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."

Our love should be faithful, free from all hypocrisy. The apostle also advises us to keep away with all our power from evil and cling always to what is good. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, describing love, says that it "does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor 13: 6) And Amos the prophet says in the same context, "Hate evil, love good." (Amos 5: 15) David the prophet likewise says, "You, who love the Lord, hate evil." (Ps 97: 10)

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another"

The apostle advises them to have brotherly love towards each other. Such love appears in giving preference to one another, feeling that the other is more deserving it. Peter the apostle says, "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Pet 2: 17) And Paul the apostle says, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Phil 2: 3, 4)

"Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"

As the apostle says to the Romans that they need to make effort and not slacken. Their inner spiritual strength ought to be always fervent and inflaming with the fervency of the Holy Spirit within them to serve with such spiritual power and devote themselves as servants of the Lord.

Whoever desires to be a true Christian has to practice doing good from all the heart, and by all spiritual powers and abilities, offering worship to the Lord in the fervency of faith.

"Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer"

Your hope in the coming heavenly good things should be with rejoicing. You should have strength and patience in facing tribulations. You also have to continue prayers, by which you can obtain help. With this help you will be able to attain the virtues of the spiritual life on one side, and to face the hardships, tribulations and trials that may befall you on the other side. The apostle Paul also says in the same Epistle, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." (Phil 4: 4-6)

"Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality"

The faithful have to assist in the needs of their brethren the saints (the faithful – the Christians), and to be ready to host the strangers without even being requested by them to do (see 1 Tim 3: 2, 5: 10; Phil 4: 14; Tit 1: 8; Heb 13: 2; 1 Pet 4: 9)

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse"

The word "bless" means that we ought to speak about those who persecute us good words and not speak evil about them (curse them).

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep"

We should share with the others all their circumstances, rejoicing with them when they rejoice, and weep with them when they weep (see Lk 1: 58). David the prophet says on this, "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart. I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily." (Ps 35: 13, 14)

"Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion"

You should have the same interests as the others, provided that your interests might not be worldly, seeking self-glorification, but rather deal humble with the others. You also should not think of yourselves higher than you ought to do, or be conceited of having knowledge and wisdom by which you have no need for assistance from others (see 1 Tim 6: 17; Prov 3: 7; Isa 5: 21)

"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men"

Your dealings with the others should not be based on repaying evil for evil, but beware doing evil. Your works should be glorious, that is, considered by the others as good works, lest the word of the gospel be insulted because of you.

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men"

Whatever is required of you, try to build it on peaceful relations with all people as far as possible. As far as you can and have ability, live peaceably with everybody. Employ all your efforts and abilities to keep peace with the others.

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord"

Do not seek to avenge yourselves on the others, but give place to God's wrath, not your wrath, for God is capable of chastening the wicked. Vengeance is His, He repays, as He says in the Deuteronomy, "Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them. For the Lord will judge His people and have compassion on His servants." (Deut 32: 35, 36) And in the Leviticus, He says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people." (Lev 19: 18) (see Mt 5: 19; Heb 10: 3; 2 Thess 1: 6)

"Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'"

If your enemy is hungry, do not take it as an opportunity to avenge on him, but rather offer him his need of food. And if he is thirsty bring him water to drink. In so doing you will force him to feel ashamed of his behavior and have conscience remorse. Such remorse is as painful as the pain he cause you to suffer. It will be as if you have heaped coals of fire on his head. (see Prov 25: 21; Mt 5: 44; 2 Kgs 6: 22)

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

You should not be conquered by evil. In other words you should repay evil for evil, but overcome evil with the good you do. (see Mt 5: 39)

Such are the duties of each one of the faithful as a member of the church, the body of Christ, to keep and fulfill them towards the other members.

=====+=====

Chapter (13)

The Duties of the Christian in the Society

(Rom 13: 1- 14)

Duties of the individual towards the country

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render

therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." (Rom 13: 1-7)

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God"

The apostle Paul addressed the faithful as being members of a community other than the Christian community, as citizens in the society. He tells them how they ought to behave and act towards the civil authority. Every one of the faithful, every soul, should submit to the rulers and authorities of the state. Those have a higher position politically and socially, and have the power to manage the state affairs. This is because those principalities and powers received these powers from God who created people to live in an organized society. Therefore the authority of the principalities is given in origin from God, and they practice their authority and their leadership according to what God has arranged. The apostle here does not refer to certain authorities or certain people, but to authority itself as a social system necessary for the foundation of a society and for its safety and security. For God has created man by nature as a social being to lead a sociable life with other human beings. Therefore organizing the society into authorities and subordinates is a matter that conforms to God's arrangement and fulfills His will, for God is a God of order not of confusion and disorder. And as we see the laws in the natural system determine the relation of the natural phenomena to each other, so also the human society should be organized according to rules determining the relations of the individuals with each other. Such rules suppose that there are rulers who have the authority and entrusted with ruling over and governing the society. In return they have

the right to receive loyalty, submission, and obedience from the people. The apostle Peter therefore says, "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men – as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Pet 2: 13-17) And in the Epistle to Titus the apostle Paul says, "Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work." (Tit 3: 1) It is worth mentioning that the Lord Christ indicated clearly that the authorities are from God, for when Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" the Lord Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." (Jn 19: 10, 11) And on the mouth of the wise Solomon the Lord God said, "By Me kings reign, and rulers decree justice; By Me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth." (Prov 8: 15, 16)

"Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves"

In this verse the apostle affirms what he said in the preceding verse, that every authority is from God, therefore all souls should submit to the authorities. And by "judgment" here is not meant eternal judgment, but judgment in this world. This worldly judgment is a human act, issued and executed by human rulers. However it has a divine origin, because the authority is the ordinance of God. Therefore who does not believe or

submit to this authority is in fact resisting God's ordinance. Those will be subject to the punishment which is the natural consequence of such contravention and disobedience.

"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same"

Who disobeys the ruler disobeys God's ordinance, but only those who do evil fear the ruler. On the other hand those who do good receive their approval and praise. So if you want to avoid fear of the rulers and authorities, do what is good for the welfare of the society that realizes for it safety and growth. This is implied in the verse in which the apostle Paul speaks about the duties of the citizens towards the country where they live and are members of. Loyalty to the society, serving its goals and working for its welfare and happiness, trying to realize for it flourishing and progress, pushing it forward and raising its level, establishing it on sound bases of truth and justice and peace, providing a safe life for its members, and providing the needs and living requirements of the individuals, all this is not a mere patriotic duty of a Christian, but rather and primarily a religious duty and a divine command. A true Christian cannot be except a good citizen, loyal to his homeland, and sacrificing for it everything to realize for it its progress.

All this is affirmation from the apostle and support of the authority of the rulers, because the apostle Paul considers an organized society is better than a disordered society, and the existence of a ruler who organizes the society is better for that society than the lack of an organization and an ruler who governs.

"For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil"

Those who work for the good of the society will receive the praise of the ruler, for the ruler works to achieve God's justice on earth. He is the minister of God who works for keeping the rights and for the welfare of the citizens. But if you do evil, then you have to fear, because the ruler does not bear the sword, which is a symbol of his authority, in vain. He uses his authority to punish whoever does evil, for as said before he is the minister of God. He received the commandment and the truth to be able to inflict punishment on all evil.

The expression "God's minister" means that the ruler works for serving and fulfilling God's will. The honor of the authority they receive imposes on them certain duties and special obligations. If they on one side rule over us, but they are more subject to God and shouldering greater responsibility, and subject to more accountability for wrongdoing. They will not left free from punishment in case they neglect abiding by the responsibility they are entrusted with. They work for the good of the moral, social, and material society and punish the wicked who do harm to the society and its interest.

"Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake"

So, we have to submit to the rulers, not only because of fear of the punishment set for those who do evil, but because the conscience of the Christian makes of this a duty on our side to fulfill and their right. Peter the apostle says, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is

commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." (1 Pet 2: 18-21)

"For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing"

If we have an obligation to be subject to the authorities, we also are obliged to pay the taxes or imposts to them, taking into consideration that they work for fulfilling God's will. They neglect their own works and devote all their time for the service of the society. Notice here that the apostle Paul repeats the words "God's ministers", supposing that those authorities do good deeds and serve the others.

"Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."

We have to give the authorities what we feel it is their right to receive and our duty to give. We give the taxes for the land or the property (see Lk 20: 22), and the imposts for our trade. We have to offer fear, that is, submission and respect to the authorities and rulers to whom fear is due, and those to whom respect and honoring are due. That is why the Lord Christ says, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mt 22: 21)

Love of the neighbor as a social duty

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall

not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor;" (Rom 13: 8-10)

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law"

As for the other members of the society, other than the rulers, who have no authority over us, we are under no obligation towards them except of love. We should love one another, because who loves another has actually fulfilled the law requirements as evident from the following verse. This means that the apostle finds in love the general rule or the common origin of all ordinances, duties, and commandments that determine our relations with the others. For each law obligation originates mainly from love, and ever contravention or violation of a commandment originates from lack of love. Love is the basis of all virtues or rather it is all virtues together. Who loves will not do adultery, for adultery is robbing another person's right and honor and taking that person as mere personal object of pleasure. Adultery does not imply any love for the other party, but rather misuse, subjection and slavery. Also who loves will not murder, because murder comes from hatred. Likewise who loves will not bear false witness, because this is given to do harm to others. Actually every commandment of the law involves love and is linked to it either positively or negatively. This is Christianity; it does not give commandments in the form of definite ordinances or certain duties or laws, but it establishes principles from which all duties proceed. Christianity set love as a basis for organizing the relations among individuals and as a basis of all virtues, for each virtue is love and each

vice is against love or is selfishness. Love is the basis of every virtue and selfishness is the basis of every vice. The contradiction between good and evil, virtue and vice, righteousness and sin, truth and falsity, and light and darkness are mainly conflict between love and selfishness. It is conflict between love with its sacrificing, loyalty, and generosity, and selfishness with its self focus and personal interests.

"For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law"

Love fulfills the law, because God's commandment in which He prohibits adultery, murder, theft, false witness, coveting, and all other commandments, all these are focused in this commandment which God gives: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself". Who loves will not do evil to others, but will deal with the others according to the commandments of the law. This is the meaning that love fulfills the law.

It is noticed here, as evident from the preceding verse, that the foundation on which the apostle Paul builds the society is LOVE. Indeed love is the best basis for building societies, for any other foundation is exposed to destruction except love. Moreover, all other virtues may proceed from this virtue of love. The commandments which the apostle discusses in these verses are the commandments of the law which organize the social relations among the individuals.

Walking properly and putting on the Lord Christ

"Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (Rom 13: 11-14)

"Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed"

The apostle Paul, speaking to the Romans, says, you have to establish your relations with the others on the foundation of love, for you know that the time we live in is suitable for waking up of our sleep and our interest in worldly matters. It is time for waiting for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, which means fulfillment of salvation for the faithful. The day of the Second Coming of the Lord is now nearer than at the time when we first believed. So if we have showed zeal and activity in doing good when we believed, how much rather now we should as the Lord's Coming Day is approaching!

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle Paul says, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as

not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away. But I want you to be without care." (1 Cor 7: 29-32) "Awake, you who sleep; arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." (Eph 5: 14) "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thess 5: 6)

Now let see what the following phrases mean:

- **Knowing the time:** Here the apostle refers to the time preceding the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, and says it is high time for work and waking up. It is not time of darkness and ignorance but time of light and knowledge. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." (Eph 5: 8) "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation." (1 Thess 5: 4-8)
- **For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed:** Here he refers to the accomplishment of our salvation on the Day of the Lord Jesus. Of course the Coming of the Lord is approaching nearer and nearer every day.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light"

The present life which resembles the dark night is on its way to vanish, while the future life is approaching. It is true that the Lord has not come yet His Second Coming, but He will come to each of us at the hour

of death. As the future life is approaching each of us, therefore we should cast off the works of darkness and put on the luminous virtuous deeds as armor.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the apostle Paul says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them; for it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.' See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph 5: 11-16) ... "The darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." (1 Jn 2: 8-11) "... by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." (2 Cor 6: 7) "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor 10: 4) And "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done

all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph 6: 10-17)

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy"

Let us behave as if the eyes of everybody are watching our deeds (as in the day). Let us walk as we ought to, and properly, with all politeness and prudence. Let us be on our guard against bold merriness (revelry), drunkenness, and committing adultery (lewdness), and all other kinds of fleshly sins, and against strife resulting from envy.

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

The Lord Christ is a pattern that cannot be repeated in our life, for we live always in Him and are found in Him (Phil 3: 9). As a person is always inside his clothes, so we should be united together in Him (Rom 6: 5). This is realized in the baptism, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal 3: 27) "... that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph 4: 24)

The phrase "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" means that we ought not to care about satisfying our desires and our fleshly lusts, as the apostle says, "But I discipline my body and bring it

into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Cor 9: 27)

=====+=====

Chapter (14)

Dealing with the weak in faith (Rom 14: 1-15:13:4)

God is able to establish even the weak in faith

"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and

every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom 14: 1-12)

"Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things"

By those described as weak in faith may be meant the Christians of Jewish origin and were still under influence of their previous worship after their conversion. Also it may refer to the Christians of Gentile origin and were under the influence of the Jews who had believed or under influence of certain religious views that distinguished between the various kinds of foods. Those thought that their salvation was dependent on such distinction, not recognizing the reality of salvation that it is not linked to any distinction related to foods, but based only faith in the Lord Jesus as Savior of mankind. Those who were weak in faith refrained from eating certain foods, thinking that these foods would have adverse influence on their spiritual and moral life, and keeping away from them would give them chance for spiritual advancement more than others.

On our part we have to receive those who are weak in faith with mercy, not seeking to judge their thoughts, or as the apostle says in Chapter (15) of the same Epistle, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom 15: 1) And in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he says, "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak." (1 Cor 8: 9)

"For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables"

Some of the believers believe that no food is prohibited, but the weak in faith eats only vegetables and deprive himself of any other kind of food, thinking it will defile him!

"Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him"

The person who in strong faith eats all kinds of food should not despise or look with contempt the person who does not eat or treat him as a narrow-minded person of poor mind, thus judging his behavior. The same applies to him who does not all things he should not judge the person who eats all things as doing wrong, for God has received him who eats all things as member of His church. How then dare you who do not eat all things to cut your relations with him who eats all things, while God has received him as His own. We should not cut relations with those who have a relationship with God as children, nor judge those who are not judged by God. We should not reject those who God is pleased with. The apostle Paul says in his Epistle to the Colossians, "Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths." (Col 2: 16)

"Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand"

Who are you to judge a servant not yours because he did not take you as his master but the Lord?! To his master he stands or falls spiritually. While you judge him, God will strengthen him and make him steadfast in faith. Therefore the Lord Christ warned us against judging others, saying, "Judge not, that you be not judged ... And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye ... Or how can you say to your

brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye' ..." (Mt 7: 1-5) And James the apostle says, "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?" (Jas 4: 11, 12)

- **Who are you:** Who are you, a weak person, to judge others?
- **Another's servant:** The Greek word "oiketys" used in this verse translated "servant" express a relationship stronger and deeper than the word "doulos" which also means "servant", because the former refers to a servant who is in the private service of his master.
- **To judge another:** All the Christians, whether weak or strong in faith, are brothers, and they all are servants to one Master. So judging one another means putting oneself in the place of the master to the other, and taking God's rank and rights. You try to judge the thoughts and intentions of the others, which none can know except God alone, for He knows the hidden things of the heart. Even if you judge someone according to his apparent actions and behavior, know that one's visible deeds do not give a complete idea about his character and his real intentions, for a person may have hidden intentions other than he shows or does.
- **He stands or falls:** This does not refer to the reward and punishment on the Day of Judgment, but to spiritual and moral standing and weakness in one's relation with Christ in the earthly life. Concerning moral falling the apostle says, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong." (1 Cor 16: 13) " ... I may hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit." (Phil 1: 27) "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1

Cor 10: 12) So, do not worry about him, he will be made to stand, for he will be steadfast in faith.

"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind"

There may someone who distinguishes a certain day, seeing it is more holy than other days, while another person considers every day holy. So, each one should be convinced according to his won conscience. The "mind" here represents the moral conscience. The apostle here gives weight to the personal conviction and to the judgment of the conscience of everybody. However, we must not forget that the apostle Paul is speaking about the conscience that is enlightened by the guidance and directions of the Holy Spirit, for this is what protects the church from individual inclinations and disorder of judgments and actions. The apostle Paul sees the church always in an organized state as the body having Christ as the Head. Furthermore, the personal considerations which the apostle refers in this verse – as evident from the following verses – are for the glorification of God. The variation of judgments reveals the variation of the degree and extent of faith.

"He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks"

He who esteems a day more than other days, does so for the glorification of the Lord's name. And he who does not esteem one day but considers every day holy, he does this for the glory of God. Likewise, he who eats all kinds of food without distinction, he does so for the glory of God, for when he eats he gives thanks to God who gave them. And he

who does not eat he does so for the glory of God, for he also gives thanks to God. Therefore the apostle Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says, "But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor 10: 30-33)

Whatever a believer does, the following consideration should be taken into consideration. These protect the church against the danger of individuality and personal inclinations, as well as against the danger of the confusion of personal convictions in judgments and actions. These considerations are:

1. Every thing should be done for the glory of God, rather than for personal self-glorification.
2. In everything a believer should seek the benefit of the others not of himself.
3. In everything we should be concerned about the salvation of the others.
4. Personal freedom should be confined to and considering the freedom of the others: "If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, 'This was offered to idols,' do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for 'the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness.' 'Conscience,' I say, not your own, but that of the

other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?"
(1 Cor 10: 27-29)¹

5. Christ is the Example for whatever judgments and spiritual measures we make, as the apostle says, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." (1 Cor 11: 1)

"For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself"

Both of them – who observes the day, and who does not observe the day – do so for the glory of God, for none of us believers lives to himself. Our existence is not our own; we are not our own masters nor own ourselves. Our goal in life is not to do what pleases us but what pleases God. And if we are exposed to death, we do not do this for self-glorification, but for glorification of God.

"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"

If we live, we live to minister to God, and if we die, we die submitting to God's will. In our life and in our death God's authority and glory are revealed, for we belong to God, and to Him we live and die. Paul the apostle says, "He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." (2 Cor 5: 15) And "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal 2: 20) "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus." (1 Thess 4: 14) "... Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." (1 Thess 5: 10)

¹ See our book in Arabic titled: "Faith in the Epistles of Paul the Apostle", pp. 45

"For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living"

All of us living or dead are His own. For this purpose Christ died and arose and lived as a man to be Master and Lord over the dead and the living.

The words "to this end" mean that Christ did this to be Lord of His own, whether living or dead. By His death and resurrection He took rule over the dead and the living, so the Lord Christ after His resurrection said that He was given all authority in heaven and on earth. The Lord Christ paid an expensive price to have this authority over all the living and the dead.

"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"

If all of us are the ownership of Christ, why then you, who do not eat all kinds of food, judge your brother who eats all kinds of food, disdain and showing contempt for him. Nobody (whether who eats or does not eat) has any right to condemn or disdain his brother, because all of us will stand before the seat of Christ who alone has the right to judge. The apostle Paul in this respect, while in Areopagus, said, "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17: 31) (See also Mt 25: 31) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Cor 5: 10)

"For it is written: 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.'

The apostle here is referring to the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath." (Isa 45: 23) "Lift up your eyes, look around and see; all these gather together and come to you. As I live, says the Lord." (Isa 49: 18) Of course here is reference to the coming life. On final judgment all mankind will offer submission and praise to the Lord.

- **"As I live"**: By these words God affirms that He is living, and always have power to fulfill this matter, that is, submission and worship to Him by everybody. We can understand the words otherwise as meaning: As life for Me (for God) is an evident and certain actuality, so also submission and worship by people to Me is a certain actuality that accepts no doubt.
- **"Every knee shall bow to Me"**: These words are used by Isaiah the prophet to refer to God, and the apostle Paul uses them to refer to Christ. This reveals the equality between the Son and the Father.

"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."

The result of all this is that each one of us will give account to the Lord for Himself. So, one should judge his own deeds not the deeds of the others. The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, says, "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load." (Gal 6: 3-5)

Commandments for those who are strong in faith

"Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."

"Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way"

The apostle Paul asks those who are strong in faith not condemn or judge those who are weak in faith for their weak faith. Rather they ought not to put a stumbling block or a hindrance in their way lest they stumble. The apostle gives in his First Epistle to the Corinthians an example of

such stumbling blocks, saying, "However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." (1 Cor 8: 7-13)

"I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"

The apostle explains that what he was going to say is built on knowledge and conviction, both of which are inspired within him by his unity with Christ "by the Lord Jesus". What he says is that no food is unclean by nature, but it becomes unclean to him who considers it so. This means that the uncleanness of a certain food is not something related to the food itself but is related to one's judgment. That is why the Lord Christ says, "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." (Mt 15: 11) (see also Acts 10: 11-15) And the apostle Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says, " Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." (1 Cor 10: 26, 27)

"Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died"

It is not sufficient to merely be convinced so that we may be sinning when we eat such foods, but we also we should behave with love towards the others. If eating such food grieves your brother, making him think evil, you will no longer be walking in love by continuing in eating such food. So let us be aware lest we destroy by eating this food our brothers for whom Christ died. We all have knowledge, but let us beware that "Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." (1 Cor 8: 1) "And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." (1 Cor 8: 11, 12)

"Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil"

A person who has strong faith, if he eats of the different kinds of food, will be exposed to be spoken of as evil by those who are weak in faith and prohibit eating all kinds of food. In such a case the weak in faith will speak evil against the strong in faith because of his steadfastness in faith. In this case the good steadfastness by which you allow yourself to eat all kinds of food without distinction will make you exposed to be spoken of as evil.

Now let us see what the following expressions mean:

- **Spoken of as evil:** Speaking evil here does not come from outside but from those who are weak in faith as we read in (1 Cor 10: 29-30). These evil words include insults, slander, and blaming. These came in the New Testament in the following meanings:

- Criticizing, dispraise, betrayal, insulting, censuring, defaming, contempt, disdain, reviling, degrading (see Mt 27: 39)
- Speaking about matters related to God in a disdainful way implying contempt, disrespect, blasphemy, and cursing (Mt 9: 3)

The words "speak evil of" in Greek mean "Blasphymw/Blasphymia"

- **Your good:** By this is meant your freedom to eat all kinds of food without distinction, as said in (1 Cor 10: 29), or your steadfast faith which makes you not distinguish between the different kinds of food.

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"

The kingdom of heavens which the Lord Christ has founded on the earth is not based on food to be eaten as one wills, but on righteousness, peace, and joy. These three virtues are among the fruit and work of the Holy Spirit.¹

The apostle Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says, "But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse." (1 Cor 8: 8) Now see what these words mean:

- **Righteousness (in Greek: dikaiosuny):** This word refers to the virtuous spiritual life in general, or to the moral perfection which

¹ See our book in Arabic "The Holy Spirit in the Epistles of Paul the Apostle" (the Holy Spirit and the Church)

appears in giving one another what is due to him, especially respecting his spiritual tendencies and inner convictions provided that these do not contradict faith.

- **Peace:** By this is meant peace towards others, or the harmony and interrelations among the faithful.
- **Joy:** This is the result of peace and righteousness.
- **In the Holy Spirit:** Actually all these virtues are the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the faithful. The Holy Spirit is the cause of the virtuous life.

"For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men"

Who serves Christ with these three virtues will be pleasing to God and able to stand in the face of any condemnation or judgments from people.

"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another"

If these virtues bear such results, we will have to seek whatever leads to peace and spiritual benefit, and to spiritual progress and growth for one another. Paul the apostle in his First Epistle to the Corinthians says, "God has called us to peace." (1 Cor 7: 15) "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being." (1 Cor 10: 24) "Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor 14: 26)

The word "edification" means trying to assist others for their progress and spiritual growth. Such edification of course requires that there be peace among the faithful.

"Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense"

With such matters which are unessential for worship, like food, do not try to hinder or destroy the salvation act arranged by God for your brother. All foods are pure and do not defile man spiritually, but they may cause inner harm and offense to the weak in faith, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled." (Tit 1: 15) Now see the meaning of some expressions:

- **For the sake of food:** This means for trivial things.
- **The work of God:** This refers to the salvation of the others through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Evil for the man who eats with offense:** This means that although the food is actually pure it becomes unclean and evil for whoever eats it with offense. It will be a sin if one eats something with unbelief and offense.

"It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak"

It is good to eat of these foods, but it is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that may cause your brother to stumble or to become weak in faith. As the apostle says in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." (1 Cor 8: 13)

A Christian is not responsible for himself only, but bears the responsibility for the others. Such responsibility imposes on him to deprive himself of things not in origin prohibited. Food for instance is not unclean nor does it defile who eats of it, but for the sake of those who are

weak in faith and suspect any food to be unclean, a believer deprives himself. He deprives himself of eating what is slain for the unbelievers, because the weak of faith suspects the cleanness of this kind of food.

"Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves"

To the strong in faith the apostle says, you have sound faith concerning foods, well, let this faith be for you and God knows it. Happy is this person who does not feel remorse or blame himself for what he does which he had previously examined accurately and approved. The apostle therefore says in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for 'the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness.' If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake." (1 Cor 10: 25-27) "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." (1 Cor 11: 31)

"But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."

Who doubts whether the food will defile him or not, with such suspect and doubt he will fall under condemnation and judgment, for not eating with conviction and faith, not being sure that the food is clean. Whatever act is done without conviction and inner faith or is done without faith will be sin. Faith for an act is like the soul for life, and any act without faith is sin. And any act done by a person not saved by the blood of the Redeemer Jesus Christ is sin.

=====+=====

Chapter (15)

Christ teaches us not to please ourselves

But each one to please his neighbor

"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.' For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: 'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.' And again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!' And again: 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!' And again, Isaiah says: 'There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.' Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves"

Those who are strong in faith and virtue ought to show mercy and compassion towards the weaknesses of the weak in faith, and not do what they desire and what pleases them.

See what these expressions mean:

- **Who are strong:** This refers to those who are morally strong, as in (2 Cor 10: 13, 9)
- **The scruples of the weak:** This may mean the weakness regarding making distinction between the various kinds of food or days. In general, here is reference to the deceiving thoughts and views resulting from weak faith.
- **Not please ourselves:** This means that we should remove away any selfishness, self-love, or focus on what pleases us. These thoughts do not include heresies and heterodoxies, for such thoughts are within the context of faith not external to it.

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification"

We ought to do what pleases the others and what is for their good leading to their edification and growth in virtue: "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." (1 Thess 5: 11)

"For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.'"

The Lord Christ Himself did not keep away from such matters that did not please Him, not preferring comfortable things which would have

been more honorable for Him. As it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." (Ps 69: 9)

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope"

The apostle Paul takes as evidence the Books of the Old Testament, for whatever had been written by the inspired men of God were written for our learning and warning. They were meant to make us hold to hope accompanied by patience and strength which the Holy Scriptures give us. The apostle further says to his disciple Timothy, "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3: 15-17) (see also 1 Cor 9: 10) Therefore, the Old Testament has not lost its power over us, for it was written for us the children of the New Testament for our learning, and for comfort, that is, for our strengthening through the Holy Scriptures, because the Holy Scripture is written by the Holy Spirit the Comforter.

"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus"

I ask God who gives each of us patience and comfort to grant you the same thoughts and interests – to be one-minded – so that you may be able to keep yourselves according to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle affirms this in other parts of his Epistles, as in: "Be of good comfort, be of one mind." (2 Cor 13: 11) "Fulfill my joy by being like-

minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil 2: 2-5) "I implore ... to be of the same mind in the Lord." (Phil 4: 2) "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor 1: 10) "Let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind." (Phil 3: 16) And Peter the apostle likewise says, "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous." (1 Pet 3: 8)

Notice the following phrases what they mean:

- **The God of patience and comfort:** The God who gives patience and comfort
- **May the God of patience and comfort grant you patience:** The patience, comfort and one-mindedness which the apostle implores God for are a gift from God to the faithful

"... that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

This verse is linked with the preceding verse regarding the request of the apostle for the one-mindedness. The apostle wants the faithful to glorify God with one spirit and one mouth, to have one mind, and to be keen on having one faith for the glory of God's name. As for the words, "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (see 2 Cor 3, 11: 13; Eph 1: 3;

1 Pet 1: 3) they refer to Christ in His human nature (see also Eph 1: 17; Mt 27: 26; Jn 20: 17; Heb 1: 9)

"Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God"

In order to be one man, and to have one heart with which you glorify God, you have to receive one another in love, as Christ has received you and made you His own. Only by this you can glorify God's name. An example of receiving one another is the words of Paul the apostle wrote to Philemon, "If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me." (Philem 17) The apostle here is taking as example and pattern of conduct the Lord Christ.

Those who believed in Christ have to receive with love all those who follow and believe in Christ. He received us in a close relationship with Him, as flock and brethren, and as children of the heavenly Father. He made us through the church a bride to Him. So, we have to do the same towards the others.

"Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers"

Christ Jesus came to serve the circumcised Jews to fulfill God's promises, by offering salvation to the Jews. In this way God's truth and faithful promises He had given to the fathers of the Jews (see Ps 89: 7).

"... and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: 'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and

sing to Your name.' And again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!'"

The Gentiles also share the salvation, and for it they glorify God who showed His mercy to them. This conforms to what God has mentioned in the Psalms, where Christ addresses the Father, saying, "Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name." (Ps 18: 49) And in the Book of Deuteronomy He says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people." (Deut 32: 43) So, all the believers whether Jews or Gentiles, have to rejoice and glorify God.

"And again: 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!' And again, Isaiah says: 'There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.'"

In Isaiah the prophecy was that Jesse would be a root from whom a new generation would come forth, and Christ who would come from this root would reign and govern over the Gentiles. In Him (Christ) as a Savior all the Gentiles shall put their hope. "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" (Ps 117: 1) "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ... And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious." (Isa 11: 1, 10) "One of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.'" (Rev 5: 5) "I, Jesus ... I am the Root and the Offspring of David." (Rev 22: 16) "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." (Gen 49: 10)

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

God is God of hope, not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. The apostle implores God who granted hope to the Gentiles to fill them with all joy and peace that they may be steadfast in faith and to have stronger hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The increase of hope is given by the grace of the Holy Spirit and His power acting within us.

Justifications for writing the epistle and requests

Justifications

"Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient — in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: 'To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall

understand.' For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you; For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while."

"Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another"

The apostle Paul here affirms his trust and confidence concerning the Romans, for although he writes to them some instructions and advices, he testifies needless of evidences from his side that they are filled with all goodness and virtue, and filled with all knowledge regarding the salvation truths. Moreover he testifies that they are in a status that allows them to admonish one another with warning and exhortation.

"Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God"

However, in spite of the apostle's confidence in the Romans, he writes to them boldly in some parts of his Epistle to remind them of the facts which they know. This is due as he says to the grace given to him by God entrusting him to carry out this task.

These parts of the Epistle are the following: (Rom 12, 13, 8: 9, 11: 17-24, 12: 3, 13: 13-14, 14: 1)

- The word "grace" here refers to the apostolic ministry entrusted to the apostle Paul.
- Given to me by God mean that the apostle Paul did not take this ministry as robbery, but God gave it to him, and as a gift.

"that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit"

This deservedness given Paul the apostle to accomplish the apostolic ministry was meant to make him a minister to Christ Jesus. He was entrusted with the holy gospel as an offering, to preach and to attract to Christ the Gentiles, so that their souls may be offerings and sacrifices acceptable to the Lord and sanctified by God's Holy Spirit.

- The term "minister" – in Greek "Leitourgos" – is used to refer to the ministry of the Holy Orders, the priesthood, as he says in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "A Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man." (Heb 8: 2)

"Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient"

All that I realized in the ministry is not by my power, but by the power of Christ. For, he says, 'I am weak. I cannot dare say that I have done anything by myself, but everything is from Christ. I am only a minister employed by Christ to spread the word of faith among the Gentiles. God has supported the word of the gospel so that the Gentiles may believe, accept it and abide by it. Christ has granted me

enlightenment and the word of salvation, and strengthened me to preach Him to the Gentiles, provided that their belief shall not be by mere word. Christ gave me power supporting my mission, so that the word of preaching may not be based on words only, but be supported by word and deed.

"... in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ"

God supported the word of preaching and strengthened it with mighty wonders accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the church. Therefore, supported by the power of God and His miracles and signs the apostle could preach in Jerusalem and around it to Illyricum (north west of Macedonia)

"And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation"

The apostle Paul was keen not to preach where another apostle had preached, so that he might not build on another man's foundation, not to prevail over the rights of the others or rob them their labors and achievements. As he says in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "Not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment." (2 Cor 10: 15, 16)

"But as it is written: 'To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.'"

The apostle Paul preached to the Gentiles and to the idolaters who had not heard about the word of salvation. So that which Isaiah the prophet had written is fulfilled, that those who were not announced or knew about Christ will see Him, and those who did not hear about Him will understand and recognize what the apostle was preaching about Christ. The prophet Isaiah says, "So shall He sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider." (Isa 52: 15)

"For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you; For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while."

The apostle says that he has been hindered many times from going to Rome, because there were some places where the word of preaching about Christ had not been heard. But having preached those places and there are no more places to visit he desires and longs to visit them. He hopes that on his journey he may see them and pay them farewell to go to Spain. The apostle says that however long his stay with them may be he will not be satisfied, but he convinces himself with this partial satisfaction.

Requests

"But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints; for it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain

contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors; for if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

"But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints; for it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors; for if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things"

The apostle mentions that he is going to Jerusalem to minister to the Christians there. He carries with him the offerings and gifts which the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia contribute with for the poor in Jerusalem. Although this is contribution from the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia, they are actually indebted to them, for if the Gentiles have become partakers of the gifts which the Jews had received, it is therefore the duty of the Gentiles to minister to them in their material needs.

"Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ"

The apostle tells them that when he accomplished this fruit of love and faith, giving their offerings to the Christians in Jerusalem, as evidence of their faith and love to their brothers the believers, then he would go to Spain passing by them on his way. This time when he would go to Rome he would be going to give them the blessing of the gospel, so that they might grow and increase in faith and virtue.

"Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me"

In the name of Christ and in the name of the love which the Holy Spirit yielded in their hearts, the apostle Paul asks the Romans to strive with him by praying for him to God. It is clear that the prayer is considered by the apostle as spiritual striving. Furthermore, to ask the believers to pray for him is an expression of the pleading intercession.

Concerning the love of the Spirit, the apostle, in his Epistle to the Colossians, says, "... who also declared to us your love in the Spirit."

And concerning spiritual striving and prayer, the apostle in other parts of his epistles, says, "With one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil 1: 27) "I implore ... to be of the same mind in the Lord." (Phil 4: 3) "... you also helping together in prayer for us." (2 Cor 1: 11) "... praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all

the saints." (Eph 6: 18) "... meanwhile praying also for us." (Col 4: 3)
"Brethren, pray for us." (1 Thess 5: 25) (see also 2 Thess 3: 1; Heb 13: 18)

"... that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints"

The apostle asks them to pray for him that the Lord may deliver him from those in Judea who did not believe, and that his ministry may be acceptable to the Christians. He is referring to the offerings he brings from the Christians who are not of Jewish origin, that it be acceptable to the believers of Jerusalem who are of Jewish origin.

"... that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you"

If the offerings of the believers in Jerusalem were accepted, and if the apostle was delivered from the unbelievers, he would by the will of God go to the Romans. He would be filled with joy and happiness, having all hindrances removed away.

"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

The apostle asks God who is the source of peace to be with the Romans (compare with 2 Cor 13: 11; Phil 4: 9, 11; 1 Thess 5: 23; Heb 13: 20)

=====+=====

Chapter (16)

Recommendations and greetings to many

(Rom 16: 1-27)

The apostle commends Phoebe

The servant of the church in Cenchrea

"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also."

Phoebe was a deaconess (diakonisa) of the church in Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth. She had carried a message to the Romans. The meaning of her name Phoebe is "beautiful/shining".¹

Deaconesses at that time performed the teaching task, and helped in baptizing women, in visiting the orphans, and in hosting the strangers. Some deny such a service in the early church. But since the New Testament mentions the deaconate service (Acts 6; Phil 1: 1), why shall we not suppose that this ministry is carried out by women as well? Probably the deaconesses were selected from among the widows (see 1 Tim 5: 3).

The words "receive her in the Lord" mean to receive her as the Lord commands concerning the others. Who loves the Lord Christ also loves those who follow Him; this is due to the faithful. Therefore the

¹ See "Dictionary of the Holy Bible" by Dr. Botros Abdel Malek and others

church had to receive Phoebe as one of the saints to whom this welcome is due, the same as saints were received with love and honoring.

The apostle Paul mentions the assistance which Phoebe had offered to many, and to him in particular. This may indicate that she was wealthy and rich as to be able to offer such assistance.

The apostle sends greetings to many

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. Greet Mary, who labored much for us. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them."

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give

thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ"

The name "Priscilla" is a Latin name which means "an old woman". She is the wife of Aquila – a Latin name which means "Eagle" – and both were of Jewish origin. They dwelt in Rome, but they left it when Emperor Claudius drove away the Jews from Rome. Paul the apostle met them in Corinth, and they offered him great assistance. Then they followed him to Ephesus, and afterwards to Rome. Certainly they were in Rome when the apostle sent his Epistle to the Romans, because he sent his greetings to them. It seems that they went to Ephesus once more, because the apostle also sent them greeting in the last Epistle he wrote, the Second Epistle to Timothy (2 Tim 4: 19).

For information about Aquila and Priscilla in the New Testament, see the following texts: (Acts 18; Rom 16: 3; 1 Cor 16: 19; 2 Thess 4: 19)

The apostle speaks about Aquila and Priscilla as "workers with him", which means that they shared the tribulations and dangers which the apostle suffered, to the extent that they risked their own necks for his life. The apostle also mentions their striving in serving the churches of the nations and to their house which became to a church where the faithful gathered for management. No doubt the Christians spent a long period with no places for worship therefore they used to gather together in houses. An example is the house of Mary the mother of John, nicknamed Mark, where many used to gather and pray (Acts 12: 12). And in the Epistle to the Colossians Paul the apostle mentions the church in the house of Nymphas (Col 4: 15) In the Epistle to Philemon, the apostle mentions the church in the house of Philemon (Philem 2)

As for Epaenetus mentioned by the apostle, his name indicates that he is of Gentile origin and converted to Christianity. He was among the earliest in Achaia who accepted faith. Achaia in the days of the New Testament was a Roman province, including the Greek countries south of Macedonia, with Corinth as capital. For the events mentioned in the New Testament related to Achaia refer to the following texts (Acts 18: 12, 27; 19: 21; Rom 15: 26; 1 Cor 16: 15; 2 Cor 9: 2; 11: 10; 1 Thess 1: 7)

Here are some of the names mentioned by the apostle Paul in the present chapter up to verse (16):

- Mary (Rom 16: 6): The apostle mentions that she labored much for them.
- Andronicus: A Greek name which means "conquers men". He is of Jewish origin.
- Junia: A Latin name, the short form of "Junianus". He likewise is of Jewish origin. The apostle speaks about them as "his countrymen", "his fellow prisoners", "were in Christ before him", and "of note among the apostles".
- Amplias: A Latin name meaning "extended". The apostle says about him "my beloved in the Lord", referring to the love with which the Lord unites the faithful to Himself.
- Stacys: A Greek name meaning a wheat ear.
- Apelles: The apostle describes him as "approved in Christ". He is witnessed to for virtue.
- Aristobulus: A Greek word meaning "excellent counselor". He is thought by some to be the grandson of Great Herod.
- Herodion: A Greek name meaning "follower of Herod". The apostle calls him "his countryman".

- Those who are of the household of Narcissus: It is a Greek name of a flower. He describes them as "who are in the Lord", meaning who believe in the Lord.
- Tryphena: A Greek name meaning "nice".
- Tryphosa: A Greek name of the same meaning "nice". The apostle says about them that they "have labored in the Lord", that is, labored in the service of the Lord.
- Persis: A Greek name meaning "Persian". She labored much in the service of the Lord.
- Rufus: A Latin name meaning "red". This name is also mentioned in the gospel of St. Mark as being the son of Simon the Cyrenian (Mk 15: 21) who carried the cross of Christ. However we cannot decide whether Rufus mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans is the same Rufus mentioned in the gospel of St. Mark or not. Some allege that they are the same person, since the gospel of St. Mark was written in Rome. The apostle Paul speaks about the mother of Rufus as his own mother "his mother and mine". Maybe the apostle during his stay in Palestine enjoyed the motherly emotions of the mother of Rufus.
- Hermas: A Greek name related to the god Hermes. Some wonder if this Hermas is the same person who wrote the book "the Shepherd".
- Patrobas: A Greek name meaning "an honorable life". It is supposed that he was one of the seventy disciples, and that he became afterwards a bishop of Pitioli where he also was martyred.
- Hermes: A Greek name derived from the name of the Greek god Hermes.
- Philologus: A Greek name meaning word-lover or knowledge-lover.

- Julia: A Latin name meaning derived from the name Julius. She might be the wife or sister of Philologus.
- Nereus: A Greek name of the sea god.
- Olympus: A Greek name, short form of Olympiadorus, which means "the gift of Zeus."

The apostle then concludes greetings asking the faithful to greet one another with a holy kiss, and conveys to them the greetings of the churches of Christ which he passed through on his voyages, like the churches of Greece and the churches of Asia.

Warnings against the false teachings

"Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you. Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

The word "note", is in Greek "skopien" means "examining a matter accurately". The apostle warns them and urges them to be aware of those cause divisions and offenses. And in his Epistle to the Philippians, the

apostle Paul says, "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things." (Phil 3: 17- 19)

By the word "divisions" the apostle means dissension resulting from envy and spirit of controversy (Gal 5: 20)

And by the word "offenses" is meant these through which evil finds place, and represent hindrances to progress and spiritual growth.

Contrary to the doctrine you learned: Here the apostle refers to the apostolic teachings received by the church which the apostle refers to in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain; for I delivered to you first of all that which I also received." (1 Cor 15: 1-3)

Then the apostle commands them to avoid those who cause divisions and offenses and deceptive doctrines.

"For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple."

Those who the apostle mentioned in the preceding verses, who cause controversies in the church, do not do that for the service of Christ

or the faithful, but for material benefit and worldly interests to be rich and notable. Moreover, they deceive the simple whose hearts are pure and not evil. The apostle further says in the Epistle to the Colossians, "Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words." (Col 2: 4) And Peter the apostle says in his Second Epistle, "By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." (2 Pet 2: 3)

"For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good and simple concerning evil"

The apostle Paul praises the obedience of the faithful in Rome, which spread and became known to all. The apostle expresses his fear lest this obedience weaken or deviate because of the deceit and misleading they face. The obedience of faith brings joy for the apostle Paul, therefore he asks the faithful to be wise in doing good, and discern between good and evil, to do good and abide by virtue, and not to do evil but to be simple concerning evil. The Lord Christ says, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (Mt 10: 16)

"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

God grants peace to the faithful to live together in love, and will crush Satan who is the cause of all divisions and offenses in the churches. God will crush him immediately so that victory will be realized quickly for the faithful over the powers of evil. The apostle did not say "subject Satan" but says a stronger expression, "crush under the feet", that is Satan will be conquered and defeated in the face of the power of faith and

authority of Christ. By faith we crush Satan under our feet. This is his place after the coming of Christ.

The apostle mentions two factors causing crushing of Satan:

- The first factor is the divine factor: "the God of peace will crush"
- The second factor is the human factor: "under your feet". So, the victory over Satan is realized by the human effort submitting to God's will.

Concluding these warnings the apostle asks God to grant the Romans grace, for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the strongest weapon to face Satan and triumph over him. In our wars against Satan we cannot conquer with our power or with our efforts or human capabilities. God's grace must work within us so that we may conquer and triumph.

Other greetings and glorifying the name of Christ

"Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."

"Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen greet you"

- Timothy: A Greek name meaning "God's worshiper". The apostle wrote two epistles in his name (1st and 2nd Timothy), when he was in Corinth and was intending to travel with the apostle to Jerusalem (Acts 20: 4).¹
- Lucius: We should not mix between the name Lucius and Luke, because "Luke" is a Latin name "Lucanus", while "Lucius" is derived from the Latin name "Lux". But probably Lucius is the same person mentioned in the Acts among the teachers in the church of Antioch (Acts 13: 1). Lucius was a relative of Paul the apostle.
- Jason: A Greek name meaning "heals". He is a relative of Paul the apostle. Most probably he is the same Jason mentioned in (Acts 17), because he was said to be dwelling in Thessalonica. Paul and Silas stayed in his house when they were visiting Thessalonica, "But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.' And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go." (Acts 17: 5-9)

¹ We spoke in detail about Timothy in the "Introduction to the First Epistle to Timothy" – in "Introduction to the New Testament" – Part II. See also our Note to the Seminary "Characters of the New Testament"

- Sosipater: A Greek name meaning "salvation of a father". He, with Lucius and Jason, were countrymen of Paul the apostle. Probably he is the same Sopater mentioned in (Acts 20: 4) who accompanied Paul the apostle in his third voyage. He also was with the apostle in Corinth while the apostle writing to the Romans.

"I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord"

- Tertius: A Latin name meaning "the third". He is the writer of the Epistle to the Romans, because Paul the apostle dictated the epistle to him and he wrote it down.

"Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother"

- Gaius: This is not Gaius mentioned in (Acts 20: 4), but maybe Gaius mentioned in the First Epistle to Corinth (1 Corinth 14) who the apostle Paul baptized. Here the apostle mentions that he hosted him and even the whole church. This indicates that his house was a place of meeting of the faithful.
- Erastus: A Greek name meaning "loved". He is not the person mentioned in (Acts 19: 22), but most probably the person mentioned in (2 Tim 4: 20). He was the treasurer of the city in Corinth.
- Quartus: A Latin name meaning "the fourth".

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen"

The apostle prays that God grants the Romans the grace of the Lord Christ.

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith"

We should glorify Him who has the power to establish you that you may live and walk according to my gospel and preaching on Jesus Christ. This gospel and preaching are according to the revelation of God and according to the mystery of salvation which nobody could have revealed or discovered by himself because it had been kept secret long. This mystery is manifested now and affirmed by the prophetic Scriptures and became known according to the command of the everlasting God to all nations, who have to show the obedience which faith requires us to show.

See what the following phrases mean:

- According to my gospel: See also (Rom 2L 16; 2 Tim: 8) He means according to the Christian teaching which was revealed personally to him: "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood." (Gal 1: 11-16)

- The mystery: It refers to what related to God's eternal will concerning the issues of faith (see 1 Cor 2: 6-10); Eph 3: 3-6; Tit 1: 2-3) The content of the gospel is a mystery. Our salvation and how it was accomplished is a mystery. The Gospel is not a new book, nor a book compiled by a man, but it is God's everlasting wisdom which supersedes all human wisdom and knowledge, revealed to us through His only-begotten Son.

*"To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever.
Amen."*

Glory is offered to God, who alone is the Wise, and any glorification offered by man in order to be acceptable to God should be offered through Jesus Christ in whom alone we received acceptance and salvation from God.

=====+=====