

ROMANS

Introduction: Jesus, God and Man (1:1-4)

1 From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, who called me to be an apostle, setting my life apart for the cause of God's gospel, ²the good news He promised long ago through His prophets, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures. ³⁻⁴This gospel is about His Son, who was both God and Man. As far as His human nature is concerned, He was a descendant of the royal line of David. As for His divinity, His God nature, God's own Spirit of holiness declared with power that He was the long-expected Christ or Messiah, God's own Son, and this was demonstrated by His resurrection from the dead. So Jesus Christ is our Lord!

God's grace on those who believe (1:5-15)

⁵It was through Him and for the outworking of His purposes that I received the grace, the spiritual enabling, to be an apostle, calling people from the nations to be obedient to God, an obedience only made possible through faith in Jesus Christ. ⁶And you also are included among those who have been called by God to belong to Jesus Christ.

⁷I am writing this to all of you in Rome and to all who are loved by God and are called to be saints, those whom He has set apart for Himself and His purposes.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ impart grace and peace to you, everything you could ever need to be at one with Him and to serve Him faithfully.

⁸First of all, I thank my God through my Lord Jesus Christ for all of you and for all you mean to me. I am so thankful because the quality of your faith and trust in Jesus is now known everywhere; yes, all over the world!

⁹⁻¹⁰God knows how faithful I am in praying for you. I serve Him with all my heart and strength by preaching the good news about Jesus and I pray that it may be God's will that I should come and visit you. ¹¹I am eager to see you in order to impart to you some gift

from God's Spirit to enable you to be strong in your faith and witness.

¹²But I am sure that I will also receive from you as well, that we will be able to encourage one another as we share our faith together.

¹³I want you to know that on many occasions I have planned to come to you but until now it has not proved possible. I want to see a harvest of souls for God's Kingdom being reaped among you in the same way that I have been privileged to witness in other nations.

¹⁴I feel an obligation towards every nation, to both those who are wise in accepting the gospel and the foolish who live in a way that is deeply offensive to God. ¹⁵This is why I am so keen to preach in Rome, to encourage you and to challenge those who do not believe in Jesus!

The power of the gospel (1:16-17)

¹⁶I could never be ashamed of believing and proclaiming the gospel. I know that it is God's powerful way of making salvation available to everyone who believes in Jesus, first the Jews to whom He came as Man, then also for people of other nations. ¹⁷All who believe the good news of Jesus are saved because they are placed in a right relationship with God, regardless of who they are or of what they have done in the past. This relationship with God can only be received as a gift from Him, and is given to those who place their faith in who Jesus is and what He has done for them. It is a matter of faith from beginning to end. Nothing we could ever do by our own efforts could ever make us pleasing to God or place us in a relationship of righteousness with Him; of being made fully acceptable to Him. This is borne out by the fact that the scriptures declare that those who are acceptable to God will live by faith.

God's judgment on sin (1:18-32)

¹⁸To appreciate this good news, you also have to understand the bad news, that God's anger towards all the sin, ungodliness and wickedness in which people indulge is revealed from heaven. Yes, this anger is as real as His love.

¹⁹We know the truth about God through our faith in the gospel. Yet God has also made plain to those who do not believe that He is real. ²⁰People only have to look at the creation around them to know that an invisible hand has brought into being all they can see. The visible creation is the work of the One who is invisible! So no man has any excuse for believing that God does not exist, simply because he does not want to be accountable to a higher authority.

²¹Some have known that God is real, but they have had no desire to honour Him or to be thankful for all He has given them. The way they think is futile; they are truly foolish people with no understanding of how important it is to know God personally.

²²⁻²³Many consider themselves wise; they exalt their reason about the revelation of truth God has given us. They think they are so clever, yet the reality is this: instead of knowing God's glory and being part of His Kingdom, they worship their intellectual prowess, or other people that they idolise. They even make images of people or animals of various kinds and worship them!

²⁴It seems unbelievable that they should do such things. But God has allowed them to do exactly what they want. They fulfil the desires of their sinful hearts by indulging in perverse acts of sexual impurity with one another. Their bodies were created for God's glory and honour, not for such depravity.

²⁵Instead of believing the truth about God as the Creator they are content to be deceived, considering it fine to do whatever they want, without any reference to their Creator. It does not occur to them that they were made to fulfil His purposes! However, you know that God is to be praised forever. Amen! It shall be so!

²⁶You see, God will not interfere with our free will or it would not be possible for us to choose to love Him. So He has allowed the ungodly to indulge their lusts, even though He hates such behaviour. Women have unnatural relations with other women, something He never intended. ²⁷Likewise, some men are inflamed with lust for one another instead of enjoying natural relations with women. The acts they indulge in are unmentionable, but sadly each will receive the penalty which is inevitable for such perversion, unless of course they repent and turn to Christ.

²⁸Is this likely when they have already thrown away the opportunity to know God and to please Him? God has allowed their minds to become more and more depraved as they seek further ways to please themselves. ²⁹Their lives are already filled with every kind of sin, greed and depravity, all of it evil in God's eyes.

Just think of all the other ways people have no regard for God's order. Some are full of envy, their lives eaten away by discontent. There is murder and conflict wherever you look. People are corrupt, deceiving others, often motivated by such greed that they do not care about anybody else. Gossip is rife. ³⁰Some think nothing of slandering others. They are God-haters, and proud of the fact. People are insolent, arrogant, full of boasting. They think up new ways of doing what is evil. Children disobey their parents without any

respect for authority. ³¹There are so many whose lives have no meaning. They are people without faith, with no compassion for others, absolutely ruthless in the way they use others for their own ends.

³²If they know anything about God's commands they certainly do not take any notice of them! However they fail to realise that He is the only One who will ultimately judge them. He has already made clear that those who live in such ways deserve death, a spiritual separation from Him eternally. Even though they are warned of this, they continue to do the very things that will lead to their own condemnation, and they even applaud others who live in the same way.

Beware of judging others (2:1-4)

2 Beware of judging others, for in judging them you may be condemning yourself if you are guilty of doing the same things. There is no excuse for these judgmental attitudes. ²God alone is the true Judge, as we all know well! He is the Truth and so always judges the immoral and ungodly with true justice.

³When you, in your human frailty, judge them, even though you also sin in similar ways, do you think this diverts attention away from yourself so that you will avoid God's judgment on your own life? ⁴Such an attitude would be to treat with contempt the wonderful kindness, tolerance and patience He has shown you. Surely you realise that God is so merciful that He can lead people to repentance, to turn away from a life of sin!

Do what is right in God's eyes (2:5-11)

⁵If you have a stubborn and unrepentant heart it is only a matter of time before God catches up with you and you experience His wrath yourself. Listen, when He comes to judge, people will see that His wrath is as real as His love. ⁶He has promised that 'each person will be rewarded for what he or she has done.' ⁷If you are going to be judged for your actions, how important it is to do what is good and right in God's eyes, for this demonstrates that you are serious about desiring to experience His glory and honour and to receive the immortality that comes with His gift of eternal life.

⁸On the other hand, if you only live for yourself, rejecting the truth of God's Word that reveals what is right and wrong in His eyes, there will inevitably be a price to pay. You show that you care nothing

about God's anger and judgments. ⁹There will be condemnation for every person whose life has been full of evil, whether he be Jewish or not. ¹⁰But there will be glory, honour and peace for everyone who does what is good, for the Jew first and then also for the Gentile. ¹¹God will not show favouritism; He will judge with justice and in truth.

Live in obedience to His Word (2:12-16)

¹²It is not a matter of being legalistic; for God will judge each according to his knowledge of what is right. He expects a higher standard from those who claim to know what is right. ¹³You see, knowing what God commands does not make you righteous in His sight; it is obedience to His Word that He considers to be the right way to live.

¹⁴Even in nations where there is ignorance of God's law, some people have an inward awareness of what is right and so act accordingly. ¹⁵It is as if God's purpose is somehow written on their hearts, even though they have never been taught God's commandments. Their consciences tell them what is right or wrong; they feel uncomfortable when they do wrong, but at peace when they do what is right.

¹⁶On the Day of Judgment, God will judge each person according to the nature of his or her heart. No secrets will be hidden from Him. How wonderful that we can be spared from the judgment we deserve through faith in Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

The Jews are also to live in obedience (2:17-29)

¹⁷If you are a Jew you may boast that God has given your people the law so that you can relate to Him as your God. ¹⁸You may claim to have clear knowledge of His will and that you live on a higher level of revelation from the ungodly nations. ¹⁹You may even be convinced that you are able to guide the spiritually blind and give light to those who live in darkness. ²⁰You may consider yourself wise and others foolish by comparison, because they lack your knowledge. You probably think that you are able to teach young people about God's ways. You have these attitudes because you consider the law embodies the knowledge of God's true will.

²¹Then let me ask you: those of you who teach others, do you need teaching yourselves? Those who preach against sin such as stealing, are you guilty of stealing yourselves? Do you withhold from God what is rightfully His? ²²You who speak against committing

adultery, are you guilty of adultery yourself, at least in your hearts? You who say that you hate idols, do you idolise yourself or others?

²³You who are proud about the law, do you keep every command God has given, or do you dishonour God through your own disobedience?

²⁴God has said that His Name is blasphemed and dishonoured among the nations because a proper example has not been set by those to whom He has given revelation of His will!

²⁵To you Jews, circumcision is an outward sign that you belong to God's covenant people. So it is a meaningful sign of your relationship to God if your aim is to obey His laws. However, if you live in disobedience to God your circumcision means nothing. ²⁶In fact, an uncircumcised person who obeys God is living as if he is circumcised.

²⁷Such a one may not have the outward sign of belonging to God's Jewish people, yet his obedience shows you up and is a challenge to you. His obedience condemns your disobedience, even though you have been given the written commandments and the outward sign of circumcision. You are the lawbreaker, not the obedient person!

²⁸I would go as far as to say that the one who only has the outward mark of circumcision but not an obedient heart, is not really a true Jew. ²⁹The circumcision God wants is a circumcision of the heart, something only the Holy Spirit can do. This is what makes a real Jew and this is someone in whom the Lord Himself delights!

God is Righteous and Just (3:1-8)

3 When you consider this, what advantages do you have as a Jew because of your circumcision? ²A great many. For a start, God entrusted His words to you; He spoke to you as a nation through the prophets and then by His own Son. ³Although not all believe God's words, this did not affect His faithfulness towards those He had chosen. It is unthinkable that He would ever be unfaithful; He is true and trustworthy in every way, even though no man can make such a claim about himself. ⁴If every man was a liar, God would still remain true!

It has been written that 'God is proved right when He speaks and His judgments are always sound.'

⁵You see, no matter how unrighteous we may be, this only serves to show the wonder of God's righteousness by comparison. So we can never accuse God of being unjust in His judgments, can we? If we are objects of His anger, that is no more than we deserve, looking at it from a purely human perspective. ⁶We could never accuse Him

of wrongdoing! For He would be in no position to judge the world if He were like us.

⁷There are always some who want to twist the truth. I have heard it suggested that if our sin reveals God's truthfulness and glory by comparison, then we should not be condemned as sinners! ⁸What a crazy argument! You may as well say straight out that we are free to do whatever evil we desire, so that good will come out of our sin. It might be difficult to believe, but some slander us by suggesting that this is what we teach. Such slanderers are certainly under condemnation themselves.

Salvation attained by faith (3:9-31)

⁹What is the conclusion of my argument? Am I suggesting that we Jews are better than others? No, that is to miss the point altogether. I have already stated clearly that all are under the power of sin, whether Jew or non-Jew. ¹⁰It is written:

"There is not even one person who is righteous, not one.

¹¹No-one understands God, nobody who truly seeks Him.

¹²For all have turned away from Him and have chosen to walk in their own corrupt ways, and so have become worthless in His sight. Nobody is good in all he or she does. Nobody!

¹³"People speak so many things at odds with God's truth that their throats are open graves; it is common practice to speak deceitfully. Their words are often filled with venomous poison. ¹⁴They curse God and are bitter in their attitudes towards Him. ¹⁵Mankind is renowned for violence, destroying lives that God counts precious.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷No wonder the course of their lives contains so much misery that they have no hope and no peace. ¹⁸In short, they have no fear of God; they have no desire to honour Him although He is their Lord."

¹⁹This seems a desperate situation. And it is, for those who live under religious law; for when you look at the demands that God makes of His people, everyone is silenced. Nobody in the world can claim to have obeyed His laws perfectly. ²⁰For this reason, there is not one person that could be judged as right in God's eyes because of his or her perfect obedience to His will. All the religious law does

3:12 *Psalm 14:1-3*

3:13 *Psalm 5:9, 140:3*

3:14 *Psalm 10:7*

3:15-17 *Isaiah 59:7-8*

3:8 *Psalm 36:1*

is to point out our inability to please God in our own strength, proving that we are all sinners.

²¹But God has His answer for this seemingly hopeless situation. He has made it possible for us to be right and acceptable in His eyes, but this has nothing to do with religious law. The writings of the Prophets and even the law itself pointed to the way that God would solve this dilemma. ²²He provided the gift of righteousness! Yes, we can be made right in His eyes, free from the guilt of sin and all condemnation, but only through faith in Jesus Christ. This righteousness, this total acceptance by God, is His gift to all who believe in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

²³Listen, I have made it clear that every living person, Jew or non-Jew, has sinned and has therefore fallen short of the glory God intended for mankind. ²⁴The good news is this: that anyone, Jew or non-Jew, can now be made completely acceptable to God. This acceptance is a free gift from God, the work of His grace, because Jesus gave His life for us on the cross, making it possible for all our sin and failure to be forgiven.

²⁵God even made His own Son the perfect sacrifice that would restore us to unity with God. Only faith in the power of His blood is needed to cleanse us and make us right with God.

Why should it be necessary for God to make His own Son a sacrifice? Because He had to demonstrate that He is just. He could not say that our sin did not matter, even though until the cross He had not shown the full judgment our sins deserved. ²⁶Sin had to be judged because it separates us from God. So His just and righteous judgment on sin had to be executed. But instead of punishing us sinners, His Son bore the punishment we deserve. As you believe that Jesus did this for you personally, so you are made totally righteous and acceptable in God's sight!

²⁷What have you to boast about? You did absolutely nothing to make your salvation possible. You cannot claim that you are right with God because of your perfect obedience to His commands. Your salvation is possible only by your personal faith in Jesus and what He has done for you.

²⁸We teach clearly that there is no other way for a person to be saved from his or her sins and the eternal condemnation he or she deserves. Faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation, and this has nothing to do with God's law. ²⁹It is clear, then, that He is God not only of the Jews but of anyone of any nation who puts his faith in Jesus. ³⁰There is only one God and He alone can make people acceptable in His sight, regardless of their nationality, whether they

have been ritually circumcised or not. It is a matter of faith in Jesus, and faith alone!

³¹ Does this mean that the religious law is of no account? No, for those who are made acceptable to God are then able to fulfil His will!

Abraham considered righteous (4:1-25)

4 Those of you who are Jews know that Abraham was our fore-father. So what did he understand about all this? ² If the basis of Abraham's relationship with God had been the works he did, then he would have had cause to boast, although not before God. No one has cause to boast before Him!

³ God's Word helps us to understand that 'Abraham was considered to be righteous because he believed God' – by faith, not by works.

⁴ A man's wages are not a gift but his right because of the work he has done to earn those wages. ⁵ However, the person who knows that no amount of work can make him pleasing to God understands that he must put his faith in God's mercy, for only He is able to forgive sinners and make them acceptable and righteous in His eyes.

⁶ David also understood this principle. He speaks of the way God has blessed those He accepts as righteous, quite apart from any works of their own:

⁷ "Blessed are those whose sins are forgiven because they have been covered by God's mercy. ⁸ Blessed is the person whose sins God will never hold against him."

⁹⁻¹⁰ Are these blessings only for the Jews, or have they been extended to people of other nations? Well, we have already seen that it was Abraham's faith that put him into right relationship with God, and this had nothing to do with the fact that he was circumcised, for he was counted as righteous by God before his circumcision. In fact, the act of circumcision was a sign of the righteous relationship he could now enjoy with God. It was a seal of that relationship, a demonstration of God's approval of Abraham because of the faith he placed in the Lord.

¹¹ This means that Abraham is the father of all who are put right with God through their faith, no matter whether they are Jews or not. God regards as righteous and acceptable any who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. ¹² Of course, Abraham is the father of all

4:3 *Genesis 15:6*

4:8 *Psalms 32:1-2*

true Jews, those who have not only received the rite of circumcision, but also walk as Abraham did, in the kind of faith he had before he was circumcised.

¹³Therefore, it was not through the law that was given much later that Abraham and his sons received the amazing promise from God, that he would inherit the nations of the world. No, it was because he was brought into right relationship with God by his faith.

¹⁴If those who lived by law could inherit the nations, there would be no need of faith and God's promises would be worthless. ¹⁵We have seen that, because of disobedience, religious law can only lead to failure and condemnation and God's subsequent judgment of wrath. But at least the law points out where we go wrong!

¹⁶So we can see clearly that God's promises are given to a people of faith; and they will only be fulfilled by His grace, what He does in and through us. These promises are guaranteed to *all* the children of Abraham, not only those brought up under the Jewish law, but also to all who live by faith in God, trusting in Him and not themselves.

So, then, Abraham is the father of all of us who believe. ¹⁷This fulfils God's Word to Abraham: "I have made you a father of many nations." In God's eyes, Abraham is a father to all who believe. He believed that God gives life to those who are spiritually dead and is able to speak of things that have not happened as if they had already taken place, so sure is His Word.

¹⁸If you had looked at Abraham's situation when God spoke to him, you would have thought it beyond any possible hope or expectation that he could become the father of many nations. But God had spoken and said this would be the case; he would have children in many nations!

¹⁹⁻²⁰When he was about a hundred years old and his wife Sarah way beyond the time when she could bear a child naturally, Abraham still believed God's promise without wavering in his faith. Sexually his body must have seemed as good as dead, yet he was not guilty of unbelief about God's promise that he would have a son. ²¹Instead, he was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God for the outcome. He was utterly convinced that God had the power to make possible what He had promised, even if, humanly, it looked impossible.

²²So you can see why God considered Abraham righteous. It was because of his faith. ²³⁻²⁴Yet this principle is not only for him, but for

all of who believe in the One who raised Jesus from the dead; they are all considered righteous by God. ²⁵This is only possible because Jesus was deliberately made the sacrifice for our sins. Yes, He died and was raised back to life because this was the only way we could be made acceptable to God.

Forgiveness, eternal life and grace (5:1-11)

5 We come, then, to this wonderful conclusion. We have been brought back into right relationship with God, and made completely acceptable to Him, through our faith in Jesus Christ. ²Through Him we now have peace with God, and all the blessings of His grace are made available to us by means of our faith. We stand daily in the flow of God's free gifts to us and we can rejoice that a greater revelation of His glory awaits us. This is our sure and certain hope.

³⁻⁴At the same time, we can also rejoice in whatever cost, or even suffering, that is involved in being faithful to the Lord. Affliction teaches us perseverance and perseverance builds character. And it is part of our character to be people of hope, looking to the future positively. ⁵Such hope does not end in disappointment because God has already filled our hearts with His love through His Holy Spirit, whom He has given to live within us.

⁶You understand that at God's appointed time Christ died for all the ungodly. He did this while we were still powerless to please Him because of all our sins. ⁷It is a rare event for anyone to die for another, even for someone who seems a good person, living a righteous kind of life. ⁸How great the love that God has demonstrated in sending His Son to die for us, while we were still sinners and unacceptable to Him!

⁹We can be sure of our acceptance because of the power of that sinless blood that Christ shed for us. We should be equally confident, then, that the process of salvation will continue in the future, that at the judgment that is to come we will be saved from God's anger, because of Jesus' great love for us.

¹⁰We used to be God's enemies but now we have been reconciled to Him through the death of His own Son. His death has brought about our reconciliation; so we can be confident that the life He has given us will continue the work of salvation within our lives. ¹¹Such wonderful truth causes us to rejoice in God because of this reconciliation we have with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we are one with God!

Adam and Jesus Christ (5:12-21)

¹²Understand, then, that sin entered the world through one man, and the consequence of that sin is death; all will die because all have sinned! ¹³Sin existed long before God gave the law to His people. If there had been no law, then men would not be aware of what God regarded as sinful.

¹⁴From Adam to the time of Moses, death reigned because people were living in sin through ignorance, not because they were deliberately disobeying God's commands. Adam was guilty of doing this, and everyone else followed him in doing what they wanted. Yet God was awaiting the time when He would undo Adam's sin by sending His own Son.

¹⁵Many died because of one man, Adam. Now through the grace of one Man, Jesus Christ, God's grace flows to many and we can receive His gift of eternal life. One man brought sin and death. Another Man brought forgiveness and eternal life – for all who believe in Jesus Christ!

¹⁶One man's sin brought judgment and condemnation. God's gift is entirely different in its consequences. Despite all our sin, His gift has restored us to a relationship of righteousness and total acceptance with Him!

¹⁷Through the sin of one man, death reigned for all through that man. Now consider the contrast! Those who receive this wonderful grace that God has supplied and the gift of righteousness He imparts to those who believe in Him, are able to share in His Kingdom now, here on earth. They can share in the reign of the one Man, Jesus Christ; yes, even in this present life!

¹⁸One man's sin led to condemnation for all mankind. Yet one act of righteousness, the sacrifice of God's perfect Son, has brought about more than acceptance; He has made His own life available to everyone who believes.

¹⁹Through one man's disobedience many became sinners. Through one Man's obedience many are made righteous and totally acceptable in God's sight.

²⁰So why was the law given? In order that men would know clearly what was sinful and their sense of guilt would increase. Only then would they see their need of the grace that God made available to deliver them from the consequences of their guilt. And God's grace is so much greater than our sin. ²¹Because of that grace, sin no longer reigns in our lives, resulting in spiritual death. Now grace reigns in us instead, because of God's gift of acceptance that

makes us able to receive the gift of eternal life, made possible through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Baptised into Christ (6:1-11)

6 What can we say in the face of such wonderful love and grace? Shall we continue to sin so that God will be even more gracious to us? ²Certainly not! What a suggestion! We have died to sin; so can we continue to live in ways that displease God? ³Surely you understand that all of us who have been baptised live now in Christ Jesus. Through our baptism we were made one with His death. ⁴Our old sinful lives were even buried with Him. You were made one with His death and burial so that, as Christ was raised from the dead through the power of God's glory, you are now one with Him in His risen life.

⁵It is simple; if we have been united with Him in His death, we shall also certainly share in His resurrection. ⁶You can be sure that your old self, lived outside of Christ, was crucified with Him, freeing you from the control of sin. ⁷Now you are no longer a slave to sin, for your death on the cross freed you from your sinful nature!

⁸Now, because we died with Christ we believe that we will continue to live with Him. ⁹Listen, it is clear that because Christ was raised from the dead, it is not possible for Him ever to die. Death can have absolutely no influence or control over Him. ¹⁰He only needed to die once, and when He did so He dealt with the power of sin once and for all. Now He lives to reveal the truth of God and His amazing grace.

¹¹In a similar way, realise that you can consider yourself to have died to sin, but that you are now raised to an entirely new life that you can enjoy through your unity with Christ as you live for God's glory!

Freed from the power of sin (6:12-23)

¹²So do not allow sin to reign in you now, no matter how much your body may sometimes crave for self-indulgence. Do not obey such evil desires. ¹³Do not use the parts of your body for sinful purposes. Do not let them be instruments of sin. No, offer yourselves wholeheartedly to God, as those who have been carried through death into a new life. Then you will offer the parts of your body to God for His purposes. They will be instruments for doing what is right.

¹⁴Sin is not your master any longer. Neither do you live under religious laws, but in the grace that God has supplied for you.

¹⁵Do you really think, as some suggest, that this means we can sin as much as we want because we are not under law? What a ridiculous suggestion! That would be a complete distortion of the truth.

¹⁶Surely you can see that you are a slave to whatever controls your life! If you offer yourself to sin, you are a slave of sin and will obey your sinful instincts. Such a lifestyle leads to spiritual death. On the other hand, offering yourself to live in obedience to God leads to a life of righteousness.

¹⁷I thank God that although you used to be slaves of sin, this is no longer the case. For you have obeyed wholeheartedly the teaching of God's truth that was revealed to you, and you are to be guardians of that truth. ¹⁸For you have been liberated from sin and can now think of yourselves as slaves of doing what is right because you belong to God!

¹⁹I am trying to put this in practical terms. You see, I know how weak you are naturally. That is true of all of us. Yes, you used to be slaves of impurity because of what you did with your bodies. Sin was on the increase in your lives. But now you use your bodies in the right way, you will do what is right, living holy lives that please our holy God.

²⁰When you were living as slaves of sin, righteousness certainly did not control your actions. ²¹What reward did you gain from all that sin? Why, you are now ashamed of those things you once did! You wish you had never done them, and now you understand that all sin leads to spiritual death!

²²However, now that you are liberated from that past life of sin, you can live as God's slave. That is not bondage, for it leads to holiness and eternal life as your inheritance. ²³You have seen for yourself that sin pays wages: eternal death and separation from God. But God's gift to you is eternal life that is yours in Christ Jesus, your Lord.

Free from religious law (7:1-13)

7 I speak to you as my brothers and as those who know the religious law. You are aware that the law only has authority over a person while he is alive. When he has died it is of absolutely no relevance to him. ²For example, a woman remains married to her husband as long as he lives; but if he dies her marriage also ends according to the law. She is free to marry again, if she so desires, without being guilty of adultery. ³Whereas if she were to enter into another relationship while her husband was alive then she would be an adulteress.

⁴So, my brothers, understand that it was only possible for you to become a living member of Christ's body because you had died to

the law first. You cannot be ‘married’ to both the law and Christ. It is clear that you live in Christ Jesus, He who was raised from the dead, so that now you might live a life that fulfils God’s purpose for you, not simply obeying a set of religious laws. When you died with Christ you died to the religious law; now you are united with Him in His risen life.

⁵In the past, when you were under the control of your flesh, your natural inclination was to sin and to break God’s law. In fact, whatever the law says you are not to do aroused in you a perverse desire to do those very things. Consequently, you used your body in sinful ways that only led to spiritual death.

⁶Yet the situation is now completely different. Because you have died with Christ, you are free from the sinful passions that once put you into bondage. You have been liberated from the very idea that you can please God by trying to obey a set of religious rules and regulations. You understand now that the only way you can serve God and please Him is by walking in the new way, led by the Holy Spirit. This is such a better way of life that it is pointless to return to your former way of trying to please God in ways that you failed to keep anyway!

⁷There is no need to suggest that the law itself is sinful. That is out of the question. The law actually taught you what pleased God and what was sinful. How did I know it was wrong to covet other people’s possessions? Only because under the law God said, ‘Do not covet.’ ⁸Despite knowing that this is His command, I was still filled with longing for what others had. Knowing this was wrong caused an even greater desire for what I wanted for myself. I would not have been so guilty if I was ignorant that it was wrong to covet.

⁹You see, when you know that a particular action is wrong and you still do it, then you sin knowingly and deliberately. The law made me even more guilty because I knew I was going against God’s will when I sinned. ¹⁰All these commands brought death, not life, because I could not obey them all! God intended the law for my good, but instead of bringing me life it produced death in me because I sinned by failing to obey all that He had commanded.

¹¹In those days I was so deceived, for although I failed again and again to obey God’s laws, I thought I was still serving Him, and did not appreciate that really I was spiritually dead because of all my disobedience.

¹²The law in itself is good, for it was given us by a holy God. All His commands are holy, right and good. ¹³Did those commands create

this death in me? Certainly not, for God has no desire to do such a thing. He had to show me that I had no power in myself to please Him. Even though what He commanded me to do was good, my sinful nature caused me to make wrong, sinful choices, which only goes to show how completely sinful I was, despite all my religious fervour.

Paul's former sinful life (7:14-25)

¹⁴The law was not the problem; the fault was entirely mine. The law itself is spiritual because it is given by God. I came to realise that in my natural state I am unspiritual, a slave to sin and disobedience.

¹⁵In fact, I often did not understand myself or why I made these wrong decisions. I wanted to please God, but ended up doing the very opposite, even though I hated the idea of being a sinner in His sight. ¹⁶Even though I disobeyed the law, I have to admit that it is good and was given by God for my welfare.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸The problem is this principle of sin that lived in me. I felt under its control and knew that nothing good lived in me, that is in my natural being. ¹⁹For even though I wanted to do what is right, I was powerless to obey. I ended up doing the very thing I was determined not to do. I kept on sinning and doing what was evil in God's eyes.

²⁰To sin persistently in this way demonstrated that I was motivated by the sinful disposition that lived in me. It seemed I was out of control!

²¹So this is the law that was at work in me: whenever I wanted to do what is good and right, evil was ready to work in me. ²²⁻²³I could have God's law in my heart, but another law was seemingly in charge, urging me to sinful action. I felt there was a kind of war going on within me, a battle that I was constantly losing because I was a prisoner of the law of sin that urged me to use my body in sinful ways. ²⁴What a dilemma! What a mess! Can you see how wretched I felt about myself? Was there anyone who could save me from this terrible predicament? ²⁵Yes, thank God! And His name is Jesus Christ our Lord!

²⁵So in my heart and mind I considered myself a slave of God's law because I wanted to please Him, yet this principle of sin made me a slave of sin.

Saved from condemnation (8:1-4)

8 How wonderful to be liberated now from all the condemnation this continual failure brought. For those who live in Christ Jesus have been set free from all condemnation. ²Through Christ Jesus a different principle now lives in me, a new law: the Spirit of

Life. He has set me free from the law of sin and death. ³Under the law I could not do what God wanted because of my weak, sinful nature. God dealt with that by sending His own Son to become man, to live among sinners and then to make His life a sinless offering to God on their behalf.

Through His action God dealt with the condemnation under which all sinners live. ⁴In Christ, all the demands God expressed in the laws He gave were fulfilled. So we now live in the good of what He accomplished. ⁴He succeeded where we had all failed miserably, so that now we can live as if we had succeeded. His success has become our success, so long as we no longer live in the weakness of our old sinful nature but now live led by and filled by God's Spirit.

Led by the Spirit (8:5-14)

⁵Those who live according to their own natural desires are always intent on getting what they want for themselves. That is their focus. But those who truly want to please God by being led by His Spirit make Him their focus. ⁶Sinful thinking leads to spiritual death; but to allow your life to be under the control of the Holy Spirit will result in sharing in God's life and knowing His peace.

⁷⁻⁸Sinful thinking is totally against God's will. Such attitudes show there is no submission to Him and His purposes, for you cannot serve God while your mind is full of sinful, selfish thoughts. That would suggest you were being controlled by your desires, not His!

⁹However, this is not the case with you. You are not under the control of selfish, sinful desires because you have surrendered your life to God to be under the power and influence of His Spirit, who actually lives in you. You would not be a Christian at all if you did not possess the Holy Spirit. ¹⁰But because His Spirit is in you, Christ is in you. Your body may still crave for self-indulgence, yet your spirit has now been brought to life by His Spirit, so that in your heart you want to do what is right before God.

¹¹This Spirit who lives in you is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. If He could do that, then He is certainly able to give God's life to your natural bodies, because His Spirit lives in you.

¹²This means that you no longer are obliged to obey your sinful desires, my brothers. ¹³To do that would lead to spiritual death. Now you have God's Spirit in you, enabling you to rule over any lingering sinful desires to indulge your fleshly instincts. So the Spirit enables you to enjoy real life, not death. ¹⁴You see, those who live as God's sons are happy to be led by God's Spirit.

We are God's children (8:15-25)

¹⁵When He came to live in you, He did not lead you back to your past life, making you a slave of fear again. No, you received the Spirit that enables you to live as a son of God. You can call Him, 'Father, my Father.' ¹⁶The Holy Spirit urges us to remember that we are God's children; to know this deep in our hearts. ¹⁷For if we know we are His children, then we know also that we are His heirs. Yes, we are heirs of God and inherit all His blessings along with Christ. We may have to face cost in being obedient to Him, but this is only so that we will also share eternally in His glory!

¹⁸Now you can see why I consider my current predicament as a minor inconvenience compared with the wonderful glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹Why, even creation itself is in suspense, longing for God's sons to reveal who they are. ²⁰⁻²¹You see, it was His will that His purposes for His creation would be frustrated until this happens. People did not choose this frustration for themselves; it was imposed on them by God, because creation can only be liberated from bondage, from that death principle we see at work all around us, by being brought into the liberty that God's children enjoy because they know and reflect His glory.

²²Everywhere around us it seems that creation is groaning just like a woman about to give birth. ²³There is even a sense in which we believers are also groaning inwardly. Although we know the Spirit is already at work within us, we long for the time when we will go to be with the Lord as His sons, when we experience the resurrection of our bodies. ²⁴This is the hope we have because of the salvation we have received.

You cannot see now that for which you hope, because hope refers to what lies in the future. If we could experience what we hope for, that would not be true hope. How can anyone say he already has what he hopes for? ²⁵No, we have to wait patiently for what God has promised us in the future.

Depend on the Spirit (8:26-34)

²⁶Similarly, we depend on the help the Holy Spirit gives us because of our weakness. We are so weak in ourselves that we do not even know how to pray. Yet the Holy Spirit Himself prays in us and for us, sometimes with such intensity that we find ourselves groaning; no words can express the depth of what He is working in us.

²⁷God searches our hearts and He certainly knows what He causes His Spirit to pray for us as His saints, the people He has set apart

for Himself. His Spirit will always pray in and through us according to God's will.

²⁸ We can be sure, then, that in everything God is working for the welfare of those who love Him, those He has called according to His purpose. ²⁹ He knew who would be His, because He decided before He created us that He would have a people who would be like His Son, those who would live as His brothers and sisters.

³⁰ This is why He called you as part of His eternal purpose. This is why, having called you, He made you totally acceptable to Him. This is why you are destined for the glory that is already yours in Christ!

³¹ How can we respond to such wonderful truths? If we are part of God's divine will, how can any opposition prevent His purposes for us? ³²⁻³⁴ So intent is He on seeing His plans fulfilled, He did not protect His Son from the necessary cost of giving His life for us all, because through His grace He wanted to give us everything that belongs to Christ. Yes, what He has, we are to have. He died, was raised back to life and is now seated in glory at God's right hand, all for our benefit. His blood liberates us. His Spirit enables us and speaks on our behalf.

God's love for us (8:35-39)

³⁵ So who could ever separate us from God's love for us, a love He has so clearly demonstrated already? Do you really think God has forgotten all about you because you experience trouble or find the going tough, or because you have to suffer persecution of some kind? Do you really think God has stopped loving and caring for you because there is famine, or you are in great need, or you are in danger even of losing your life? ³⁶ It was written: 'It was for your sake that we faced death and are as sheep that are being led away to be slaughtered.'

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through Him, for He has already won the victory for us and demonstrated such love for us. ³⁸⁻³⁹ I am totally convinced that death cannot separate us from Him or His love. Neither can anything that could ever happen to us in this life! No angels can stand in the way of God's personal love for us, nor can any demons prevent that love. Nothing in the present, nor anything that could happen in the future, would be able to destroy God's love for us. There is no spiritual power, nor any created power, that will ever be able to separate us from God's

love for us that has already been so clearly expressed in Christ Jesus our Lord!

The Jews rejected Jesus (9:1-5)

9 My only desire is to speak the truth in Christ. I do not want to lie or exaggerate. My conscience is clear about this and the Holy Spirit, who works in and through me, bears witness to this. ²He knows how heavy my heart is, and He understands the great sorrow and anxiety I feel about my fellow Jews. ³There are times when I feel that I would be prepared to be cursed and separated from Christ if only this would cause people of my own race, the people of Israel, to turn to Him.

⁴Because they are His chosen people, they are the very ones who should know the wonder of being adopted as His sons. They should be able to experience God's glory. They should be part of the new covenant and the new relationship with God, as they were His people under the old covenant. They received the law; so God longs for them to accept His grace. He gave them the temple as a place of worship, but they rejected Jesus Christ when He came as God's living Temple. God gave them wonderful promises, but they are only fulfilled by faith in Christ, a faith they do not have.

⁵The Lord is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, their forefathers, and when Jesus came as a man He came as a Jew. All this was the purpose of God, who is to be praised forever. Amen! This shall be so!

God's Sovereign will (9:6-24)

⁶All this does not mean that God's Word is faulty or that His purposes have failed. The failure is not with God, but with His people. It is clear that not all who are the descendants of Israel are true Israelites. ⁷Because they can trace their ancestry back to Abraham, does not make them His true children. Far from it! God's true children would be like Isaac, children born as a result of His actions in fulfilment of His promise. ⁸To be born naturally does not make anyone a child of God!

It is those who believe His promises who are really Abraham's offspring. ⁹God told Abraham that at His appointed time He would ensure that Sarah would give birth to a son, even though that seemed physically impossible.

¹⁰Besides this, we can see that God's purpose was worked out through Isaac's sons. Rebekah gave Isaac two sons, born as twins.

¹¹⁻¹³But even before their birth, when neither had done anything good or bad, God decreed that the older one would serve the younger. This was His purpose, His calling on Jacob's life, not the result of anything he had done. It was simply God's purpose to use Jacob rather than Esau, who counted his birthright and blessings of such little value.

¹⁴Shall we charge God with being unjust? Never! His judgment was proved to be correct! ¹⁵What did He say to Moses?

"I will have mercy on the one on whom I have chosen to have mercy, and I will show compassion to the one to whom I have chosen to show compassion."

¹⁶Whatever God does depends on the ways in which He has chosen to reveal His mercy. No desire or striving on man's part can ever bring His will about. ¹⁷Look at what the scriptures say about Pharaoh: "I raised you up for My purposes so that I could display My awesome power, and do such mighty things that My Name would be known throughout the world!"

¹⁸He can show His mercy to anyone to whom He chooses to show His mercy; and He can harden the heart of anyone who opposes Him.

¹⁹Now someone may want to argue that if God is able to harden hearts, why does He blame us for disobedience to His will? ²⁰Who do you think you are, to judge God for the way in which He has chosen to work? Is it right for a created one to even question His Creator? Can you ask God why He made you as you are, as if your failings are His fault? ²¹A potter can make whatever he wants out of a lump of clay, some beautiful articles and others for mundane, everyday purposes.

²²So consider this. How is God to reveal everything about Himself? How can He show people that His anger is real unless there are those who deserve to be judged and condemned? Yet at the same time he showed such great patience with the one who opposed Him, even though He knew what the final outcome would be!

²³By contrast, God is also able to reveal the richness of His glory that He shows to those who receive His mercy, those like us who He has determined in His pre-ordained purposes should know His glory. ²⁴For whether we are Jewish or not, He has called us believers to know His mercy and His glory!

Christ: a stumbling block to the Jews (9:25-33)

²⁵ He said through His prophet Hosea: "I will call 'My people' those who formerly were not My people; I will declare My personal love for those who had not known My love." ²⁶ He also says that it will come about that people who were told that they were not His chosen ones shall become sons of the living God.

²⁷ God spoke about Israel through Isaiah, saying that their number would be as grains of sand on the seashore, but that only a select number would know His salvation. ²⁸ With great speed the Lord will in due time judge those living on earth; and His judgment will prove to be final!

²⁹ Isaiah also said that if it were not for His mercy, the Lord Almighty would have no descendants at all. For if He treated all of us as we deserved, we would be wiped out like Sodom and Gomorrah!

³⁰ So what conclusion can we reach? Even non-Jewish people, who never even sought to live in ways that are right and pleasing to God, have been put right with God and made acceptable to Him as a result of their faith. ³¹ Yet Jews, who sought to be right with God through trying to obey the law, never obtained their objective. ³² Why was this? Because instead of living by faith, they tried to make themselves acceptable to God through their own accomplishments. They stumbled over Jesus, the 'stumbling stone', by rejecting Him. ³³ God had warned that He would lay among His chosen people a Stone that would cause people to stumble and a Rock that would be their downfall. And He was proved correct. But He also said that anyone who put their trust in that Rock would never be put to shame!

Paul's desire for the Jews to know Jesus (10:1-21)

10 Dear brothers, I have a longing in my heart that I express in prayer to God, that those of my own race will come to know the salvation that has been made possible through their Messiah, Jesus. ² I can tell you from first hand experience that the Jewish people are serious about God, but the religious fervour they show does not come from the revelation that God has given in His Son. ³ As a result, they do not understand that we can only be put right with God and made acceptable to Him through faith in Jesus Christ. Instead they

9:25 *Hosea 2:23*9:26 *Hosea 1:10*9:28 *Isaiah 10:22-23*9:29 *Isaiah 1:9*9:33 *Isaiah 8:14, 28:16*

persist in trying to establish their own righteousness through their own actions; they refuse to accept that God has now provided a far better way, the only way to true righteousness and acceptance.

⁴With the coming of Christ and the establishing of the new way, the religious law that God gave has now been superseded. Everyone who accepts that Jesus is the Way can now receive God's gift of righteousness, regardless of his or her race.

⁵Moses summed up the kind of righteousness that was possible under the law by saying that the person who lives by the law will do what the law says. ⁶However, there is now a different approach because of the total acceptance that He has been given by faith in Jesus.

A believer does not need to have the heart attitude that he has to break through to heaven to bring Christ down into this life. ⁷Neither does he have to think that he must wait until death before he can know the Lord personally!

The word of truth and faith (10:8-21)

⁸What should He believe then? "The Word of truth is near you now; if it is in your heart it will be expressed in what you say." It is this word of faith that I am explaining to you. ⁹If you openly declare that Jesus is the Lord and have heart conviction that God raised Him from the dead, you will certainly be saved. ¹⁰You see, your faith must come from your heart, for then you are made one with God; but you must also openly declare your faith to receive the full salvation that is His gift to you. ¹¹For it is written: "God will never put to shame anyone who trusts in Him." ¹²⁻¹³In the matter of faith there is no difference between Jew and non-Jew. The same Lord Jesus is Lord of all and willingly gives His rich blessings to all who turn to Him, for it is also written: "Everyone who calls on the Lord's name shall receive salvation."

¹⁴But how is it possible for people to turn to Jesus if they do not believe who He is? How can they believe if they have never received revelation of the truth? And how will they ever hear unless someone tells them about Him? ¹⁵And who will the Lord send to open their eyes and hearts to the truth?

It is written: "Those who bring the good news to others have beautiful feet." ¹⁶Sadly, not all Jews were prepared to accept the

10:5 *Leviticus 18:5*

10:8 *Deuteronomy 30:14*

10:11 *Isaiah 28:16*

10:13 *Joel 2:32*

10:15 *Isaiah 52:7*

good news. No wonder Isaiah said: “Lord, who has believed the message you gave us?” ¹⁷Faith in the truth can only come when you have heard the truth, and that truth is contained in the words of Christ.

¹⁸I ask myself whether they truly heard. Then I realised that they certainly did because God’s Word is now being proclaimed everywhere around the world. ¹⁹I cannot help wondering whether the Jewish people understand the truth they heard. After all, God spoke through Moses by saying: “I will make my chosen nation jealous because of those who do not form a nation. I will make you angry because revelation is given to people who have no understanding of Me!”

²⁰He says through Isaiah: “I was found by those who were not searching for Me; I made Myself known to those who did not even enquire about Me.” ²¹Yet Isaiah also tells us that God said: “I have continually held out My hands to My people, but they have been disobedient and obstinate.”

A faithful remnant (11:1-12)

11 So I ask, has God rejected the Jews? Not at all! I am a Jew myself. I am descended from Abraham by birth, from the tribe of Benjamin. ²God did not reject His chosen people; He came to them. Surely you know what the scriptures say about the way Elijah complained about Israel. ³He said: “Lord, they have killed those you sent to them as prophets. They have desecrated your places of worship. It seems I am the only one who remains faithful to you, and they are trying to kill me too!” ⁴How did God answer him? “I have seven thousand that I have kept faithful, who have refused to worship the false gods.”

⁵The same is true today. There is a remnant, a small number of Jewish people whom God has chosen to know and receive His grace. ⁶They understand that it is only by His free gift of grace, and not by their own works, that they have been made one with the Lord. They know that if they could achieve what they have received by their own efforts, God would not be the God of grace!

⁷So what conclusion do we reach? What the Jewish people longed for they did not receive. But those God has chosen to know His grace did receive what had been promised. Those who refused

10:16 *Isaiah 53:1*

10:19 *Deuteronomy 32:21*

10:20 *Isaiah 65:1*

10:21 *Isaiah 65:2*

11:3 *1 Kings 19:10, 14*

11:4 *1 Kings 19:18*

to accept Jesus as God's Son did so because of the hardness of their hearts. ⁸This is why it is written that God caused them to be spiritually blind. They did not have eyes that could see or ears that could truly hear. And it is the same to this very day!

⁹David prayed prophetically by suggesting that their religious ways would become a trap for them. Their self-righteousness would be a stumbling block that would result in punishment. ¹⁰They deserved to be spiritually blind and to remain so. They deserved to remain overburdened forever!

¹¹There is another question we need to consider. Did the Jewish people fail to such an extent that they could never recover their place in God? Definitely not! It was because of their sin and rejection of the gospel that so many non-Jewish people are now being saved, and this should make the Jews jealous of what they have received. ¹²But think of this: if their failure has brought God's great riches to others throughout the world and their emptiness has resulted in non-Jewish people receiving the great riches of God's grace, how much more wonderful will it be when they do enter into their inheritance and receive the fullness of God's life in Christ!

Gentile believers grafted in (11:13-24)

¹³Yes, I am now addressing those among you who are not Jewish. God has made me an apostle to the non-Jewish nations; He has sent me and given me this ministry among all these peoples. ¹⁴I want to make the most of this calling, trusting that in doing so I will cause my own people to think again because they see how others are being blessed by God. Instead of being jealous, I want at least some of them to receive the salvation God wants for them.

¹⁵I have to admit that their present rejection of the gospel has enabled many throughout the world to be reconciled to God; yet I am excited about the prospect of what will happen when they accept Christ. Instead of the death of trying to please God by their own efforts, they will receive the free gift of His life!

¹⁶If one part of the lump of dough is considered holy, then the whole lump is holy! If the root of the tree is holy, then so are its branches!

¹⁷Israel can be likened to an olive tree; some of the original branches have been broken off. You non-Jewish believers were once wild olive shoots that have now been grafted into this tree. You are

11:8 *Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 29:10*
11:10 *Psalms 69:22-23*

nourished by the sap that flows through your lives from the roots.

¹⁸So you have no cause to boast or think that you have nothing to do with Israel. It is obvious that you do not give life to the root; the root gives life to you! ¹⁹You could say that the unbelieving branches were cut off so that you could be grafted into this olive tree. ²⁰That is true. But you are only where you are by faith, not by your own accomplishments. So you have nothing to boast about. Rather, you should be in awe of what God has done. ²¹If He dealt so strongly with the unbelieving branches, He will deal just as strongly with you.

²²You see, God is both kind and strict. He enforces His judgments strictly on those who reject His grace, but is kind to those who believe, on the understanding that they will continue in faith and so continue to be objects of His mercy. You do not want to fall into unbelief and be cut out of this tree, do you?

²³If the Jewish people do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted back into the tree. God is surely able to do such a thing!

²⁴If He could cut you out of a wild olive tree and graft you into the tree He Himself has cultivated, how much easier it must be for the branches that rightly belong to His tree to be grafted back into it! After all, it was originally their tree!

God wants Israel to be saved also (11:25-36)

²⁵Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant about this subject, which to some is a mystery. You must not become conceited. The reason why the Jewish people have been subjected to a hardening of their hearts is so that God can gather into His Kingdom all the non-Jewish people that He is calling. ²⁶But then He wants all Israel to be saved also. It is written:

“He who God sends as the deliverer of His people will come from among His chosen people, the Jews, and He will be the One to save them from their godless ways.

²⁷For they are still a covenant people; a people of promise and He will save them from all their sins.”

²⁸At present they are enemies of the gospel, but only for your benefit. Yet they still retain God’s calling; they are still the objects of God’s love. He will still fulfil the promises given them through their forefathers. ²⁹For once God has called a people and set them apart for Himself, He will not change His mind, just as He will not take away the gifts He has already given us.

³⁰⁻³¹ You were once disobedient towards God; yet now you have received His mercy and forgiveness. This is only because the gospel came to you through their disobedience. Just as you were disobedient and have now been saved, cannot they also turn from their disobedience and also receive the same mercy and forgiveness from God that you have already received? ³² God considered that all were disobedient to Him, whether Jewish or non-Jewish; so all are in need of His mercy. And He wants everyone to experience His mercy and forgiveness.

³³ I am overwhelmed by the extent of the great riches that come from knowing and understanding God's wisdom. His judgments cannot be questioned, and no one can do what only He can do in leading people to salvation.

³⁴ "Who can claim to understand everything about the way the Lord thinks? Who could dare to give Him advice? ³⁵ What could any of us give to God that would obligate Him to give to us in return?"

³⁶ Everything that we receive comes from God and is given through Christ, all for the outworking of His purposes. Yes, it is true: all the glory belongs to Him. He alone deserves to be honoured! Amen! It shall be so.

Living sacrifices (12:1-3)

12 In the light of this wonderful mercy God has shown us, I strongly encourage you, as my brothers, to give your bodies to God in living sacrifice; do what is holy and pleasing to Him. This is the kind of worship He really wants and that is the outworking of the life of His Spirit who lives within us.

² In order to live like this you cannot also live according to the standards of the world around you. You need a completely different mindset so that you are certain of God's will for your life and are prepared to put His will into action, for His will is good; it pleases Him because it is perfect!

³ God has given me apostolic grace and so I can tell all of you not to think too highly of yourselves. No, have a realistic estimate of yourselves, according to the faith God has graciously given you.

All members of the same body (12:4-15)

⁴ Every one of us has a body with several different parts, each with its distinctive function. ⁵ In the same way, all those who belong to

11:34 *Isaiah 40:13*

11:35 *Job 41:11*

Christ form His one Body. So we all belong to Him and also to one another. ⁶As with the parts of a human body, we do not all have the same functions. No, we have different gifts according to the way God has appointed that His grace is to operate in our lives. Some are particularly gifted to speak prophetically, bringing a word from God to others. The way they are able to do this effectively depends to what extent they live by faith in God. ⁷Others have servant hearts and are therefore content to serve God by serving others. Still others are gifted to teach God's Word and they should use this gift for the benefit of others. ⁸Some are really great at encouraging their fellow believers, and this should be recognised as a gift from God for the good of the whole Body. Others are called to give financially to help others and they should give generously.

The church needs leaders who realise the importance of their calling and so devote themselves to the welfare of those they lead. Others are people with great compassion and mercy, and so need to be joyful about the way they show God's love to others.

⁹For we must be sincere about the way in which we love others: from the heart, not simply as a duty. We should hate anything that God regards as evil, but love what He considers good.

¹⁰⁻¹¹As members of the same Body, we are to be devoted to one another, loving each other as members of the same family. This involves honouring others above ourselves and always being eager to serve the Lord by doing whatever He asks of us, and doing it with all our hearts.

¹²We are also to radiate joy because we are a people of hope. Whenever we have to suffer affliction we are to bear it patiently. And we will be faithful in prayer. ¹³We will be a people who love to give, sharing our resources with God's people who are in need and welcoming others into our homes.

¹⁴As members of Christ's Body you are to bless those who oppose you because of your faith. Yes, bless them, do not resent or curse them! ¹⁵There will be times when you need to rejoice along with those who are happy and blessed, but other times when you will share in the grief of those who are mourning.

Godly instruction (12:16-21)

¹⁶It is an essential witness that we are seen to live in harmony with one another. Such unity is destroyed by pride. So we will not be proud, but willing to show God's love to anyone, regardless of who or what they are. And we will not be conceited!

¹⁷Do not retaliate when anyone offends or hurts you. Make sure that others can see clearly that you do what is right. ¹⁸And always live at peace with others, as far as this is possible. ¹⁹There is no point in taking revenge; you are to forgive, my friends, not judge others. That is God's prerogative. He is the only one who can judge, punish or demonstrate anger, as He Himself has told us. ²⁰He also tells us to "feed our enemies if they are hungry, to give them something to drink when they are thirsty. For in giving to them when they least deserve it, you will bring them under conviction of their sin." ²¹Never let evil have the upper hand in your life. Rather, let your goodness defeat evil!

Submit to authority (13:1-7)

13 It is necessary for you to have a right and submissive attitude to those in authority, including those in civic government. For all authority originates from the Lord, who is the ultimate authority. God Himself has put these governing authorities in place.

²So anyone who rebels against authority rebels against God who set that authority in place. All those who rebel will only bring judgment on themselves. ³If you do what is right you do not need to fear the authorities. It is another matter for those who do wrong! There is no need to be afraid of those in authority, for if you are a good citizen who obeys the law you will be well thought of. ⁴Those in authority are there for your good so that there will be order in society. In fact, they are serving God's purposes, even in punishing those who do wrong. ⁵However, you should submit to those in authority, not out of fear of punishment, but because your conscience tells you this is the right thing to do!

⁶For you can see that it is right that you should pay taxes, for those who govern are serving God's purposes and they need the necessary resources to do what, after all, is their full-time job! ⁷It is a good principle to pay everyone what you owe so that you are not in debt. Pay your taxes and bills on time, for in this way you show respect and honour others.

Live a life of love (13:8-14)

⁸There is one debt that you should always have: to love each other. The one who loves fulfils God's purpose for His life. For love is really the fulfilment of what God has commanded us to do. ⁹You know the

12:19 *Deuteronomy 32:35*

12:20 *Proverbs 25:21-22*

commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet other people's possessions.' There is a principle that underlies all such commands and is summed up in the one command to love your neighbour as yourself.¹⁰ Because those who love will not want to harm their neighbours, they will obey all these other commands; for the way to fulfil God's law is through love.

¹¹No matter what the situation, love is always to be the guiding principle by which you live. It is time to stir yourself and ensure that you do this in practice, demonstrating that you are living in the good of the salvation God is giving you. The time of having to give account of yourself to God is nearer now than when you first became a believer.¹² It may seem that there is so much darkness around you, but a new dawn is about to break. So be sure that you are free from any activity that belongs to the darkness and that you are walking in the light.¹³ If this is the case, you will have nothing to be ashamed of in the way you behave. You will never engage in orgies or drunkenness like those who belong to the darkness. You will not be party to any form of sexual immorality or depravity. Neither will you be a person with an independent mindset or one whose life is ruined by jealousy.

¹⁴Instead you will radiate the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, living as His witness. How much better to have that as your aim than to live to gratify your fleshly, self-indulgent desires.

Do not judge others (14:1-13)

14 Do not judge those whose faith is weak; encourage them. There are bound to be issues about which you disagree, over diet for example.² One person believes he or she can eat anything, but another with a different level of faith believes it is right only to eat vegetables.

³The one who feels free to eat anything should not have a condescending attitude towards others, just as the vegetarian should not judge the one who eats meat. God has accepted all those who are His servants.⁴ So do not judge those He has called to serve Him. Each will be responsible to Him for what he or she does, for He is the Master of us all. And the Lord enables us all to stand confidently before Him.

⁵There is another issue of contention. One believer regards some days as being more holy than others. Another regards every day as of similar importance. Who is right? Well, each person must do

what he or she firmly believes to be right. ⁶Those who believe that certain days have special significance are convinced they are honouring the Lord. The meat eater thanks God for His food; similarly the vegetarian is also thankful.

⁷⁻⁸This is the principle, then. That in whatever we do, we are convinced that we are serving the Lord in ways that please Him. We are not living for ourselves, but for Him! Because we belong to Him, we should even be prepared to die for the Lord. What significance are petty differences when compared with that?

⁹Christ died and rose again and so is Lord of both those who have died and all who are alive now. ¹⁰On what authority, then, do you judge your brother? What gives you the right to think He is in any way inferior to you? Every one of us will have to stand before God on Judgment Day. ¹¹He has said:

“I declare that as surely as I live, every person will have to bend his knee in homage to me and every tongue will declare that I alone am God.”

¹²At that time, each of us will be held responsible for what we have believed and done. ¹³In light of this, we had all better stop judging each other. We must be determined not to cause any of our fellow believers to stumble; nor do we want to make things difficult for them.

Attitude towards food (14:14-23)

¹⁴You know I live in close relationship with the Lord Jesus and I am personally certain that no food is forbidden by God. However, if someone believes that it is not right to eat certain foods, then He should obey His conscience in this matter.

¹⁵If you eat anything when you are with other believers who are genuinely upset to see people eating meat, then you are not acting in love towards them. You do not want to cause your brother to have any unnecessary distress, for Christ died to free them as He died to free you.

¹⁶I do not suggest that you should allow others to speak negatively of what you consider to be good and right. ¹⁷God’s Kingdom has nothing to do with what we eat or drink. No, this Kingdom to which we belong is expressed in righteousness, peace and joy through the Holy Spirit living in us. ¹⁸This is where our focus needs to be, for then we are truly serving Christ, pleasing God and will be well thought of by others.

¹⁹How important it is, then, to attempt to live in ways that encourage unity among us, seeking to edify one another. ²⁰We do not want to damage the cause of God's Kingdom for the sake of differences over what we should eat!

Even if you believe, as I do, that it is permissible to eat anything, it would be wrong to eat in a way that would cause a problem for others. ²¹So when you are with those who think it is wrong to eat meat or drink wine, refrain from doing so. Then you will not offend their tender consciences!

²²Your personal beliefs about such matters are between yourself and God; you are responsible to Him! So you are blessed if you can eat or drink without any qualms of conscience. ²³But it would be wrong for another to be forced to eat anything he considers it wrong to eat, for then he would feel condemned for not doing what he believed to be right for him. For whenever we fail to act out of what we believe to be right, we sin!

Help the weak in faith (15:1-13)

15 Those who are strong in faith should be sensitive towards those weaker in faith, and should not behave in ways that simply please themselves. ²You want to bless your neighbour and do him good, to build him up and encourage him. ³Even Christ did not live to please Himself, as the scripture makes clear. "He is insulted in the same way that God is insulted." ⁴And we are to learn from what the scriptures say, even those things written long ago. God's truth will encourage us to persevere through the testing times and will help us to maintain our hope that we shall see the fulfilment of God's purposes.

⁵⁻⁶God Himself enables this perseverance and gives us encouragement. So may He cause the Spirit of unity to be imparted to you so that you may give glory and honour to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ with both your hearts and mouths.

⁷Simply accept one another in the same way that Christ has accepted you; this will give true praise to God. ⁸Let me remind you that Christ came to the Jewish people as a servant, to reveal the truth about God and to ensure that the promises given to their forefathers would be fulfilled. ⁹For this would enable those who are not Jews to live for God's glory and honour, being thankful that they, too, have known His mercy first hand. It is written "I will be praised among

15:3 *Psalm 69:9*

15:9 *2 Samuel 22:50*

the other nations; they too will lift their voices to worship Me.”¹⁰ He tells these other nations to rejoice along with His chosen people.

¹¹ Yes, He commands all nations to praise the Lord, along with the Jewish people.

¹² Isaiah prophesied that from among the Jews God would raise up the One who would rule over the nations; and He would be the hope of all people everywhere. ¹³ So I pray that this God of hope, who keeps us looking expectantly to the future, will fill you with His joy and peace as you continue to live by faith in Him. May the power of the Holy Spirit work in you in such a way that you will always overflow with hope, expecting God’s best!

Paul’s responsibility to proclaim the gospel (15:14-33)

¹⁴ My dear brothers, I am sure that you want to live good lives, to know and understand God’s purposes. And you want to be able to teach one another the way of truth. ¹⁵ This is why I have felt free to be outspoken about certain matters in the way I have written. I am only reminding you of what you already know to be right. ¹⁶ I always depended on the grace God has given me to be Christ Jesus’ faithful minister to the nations. I have a responsibility as His representative to proclaim His gospel so that among all nations there will be those who offer their lives in service of God’s Kingdom, people who are made holy by God’s Spirit and set apart for His purposes.

¹⁷ I am so thankful to Christ Jesus for this ministry God has given me. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ I would not dare to take any glory to myself, for truly it is only what Christ has done through me that has led to many from different nations being brought to obedience to God. Yes, He has used what I have said and done, even enabling me to perform supernatural signs and miracles. But these are all the result of the power of His Spirit.

From Jerusalem to the farthest reaches I have proclaimed Christ’s gospel fully in word and deed. ²⁰ My aim is always to preach the gospel where people have never even heard of Christ. I want to begin new works rather than build on foundations laid by others. ²¹ For we have God’s word that says, “Those who were not told about Him will see, and those who have never heard of him will come to understand who He is.” ²² It is for this reason that I have been prevented from coming to you personally.

²³ However, I feel my calling in these areas is now fulfilled and so I am planning to visit you, something I have longed to do for many

15:12 *Isaiah 11:10*

15:21 *Isaiah 52:15*

years. ²⁴It is my intention to do this on my way to Spain, and then you will be able to speed me on my onward journey there, after I have enjoyed sharing fellowship with you for a time.

²⁵First, though, I have to go to Jerusalem to serve the saints, our fellow believers, there. ²⁶It is good that the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have wanted to support financially their brothers in Jerusalem who are fighting poverty. ²⁷They were really pleased with the opportunity to help them in this way. You could say that they owe such a debt to their Jewish brethren. After all, even though they are not Jewish themselves, they now share in the spiritual blessings that are the inheritance of the Jews. How fitting to give their material blessings in return!

²⁸After I have fulfilled this responsibility, making sure these financial gifts arrive safely, I will then be free to go to Spain, visiting you on the way. ²⁹And I am confident that when I arrive I will be able to impart great blessing to you through Christ, for we enjoy the full measure of His life.

³⁰Let me encourage you strongly as my brothers to pray to God for me, for this will help me in all my difficulties. I am sure that the Lord Jesus wants you to support me in this way, and so express the love you have for me through the Holy Spirit. ³¹The difficulties to which I refer are caused by the opposition of unbelievers in Judea. And I really desire that my ministry in Jerusalem will be well received by God's people there. ³²Then I can become confident that it will be God's timing for me to come to you with joy, that together we may be refreshed by the Lord. ³³May the God of peace be with you all! Amen! It shall be so!

Final greetings (16:1-27)

16 Phoebe is about to visit you and I want you to receive her in a way that will bless the Lord. She is our sister in faith and a servant of the church in Cenchrea. ²So I am sure you will treat her in a worthy manner, as befits the saints of God, and that you will help her in any way necessary. She is herself a wonderful servant, and has helped many others, including me.

³Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila. They have been fellow workers with me in Christ Jesus. ⁴They even risked their lives for me. All the churches among the nations are thankful to God for them, as I am myself. ⁵And greet all those who belong to the church that meets in their home.

I send my love to my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person I led to Christ in the province of Asia. ⁶And greet Mary, for she has given herself tirelessly for your sakes.

⁷Give my kindest regards to my relatives Andronicus and Junias. We were in prison together and they have proved to be outstanding apostles. In fact they were believers in Christ before I was myself.

⁸I love Ampliatus with the Lord's love. ⁹Give him my greetings, along with Urbanus, another fellow-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

¹⁰Apelles has been through times of testing, but has surely proved himself to be approved in Christ. So greet him along with all those who are part of Aristobulus' household. ¹¹And greet another relative of mine, Herodion. And greet all those in the household of Narcissus who belong to the Lord. ¹²Also I want you to remember me to Tryphena and Tryphosa. These two women work so hard in the Lord's purposes. And also another hard-working woman, Persis.

¹³Give my love to Rufus, clearly one chosen by the Lord; and to his mother who has also been like a mother to me. ¹⁴And also greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and all the brothers that belong to that group of believers. ¹⁵Also greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympus, and all the saints in their group.

¹⁶Show your love for one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ that I represent join me in sending their greetings.

¹⁷I love you so much, brothers, that I am concerned that you beware of any who would cause divisions to arise among you, or who in any way would hinder you in your faith and witness, by teaching things that are not in agreement with the gospel you have already received. Avoid such people. ¹⁸They do not serve the Lord Christ but only their own ambitions. They have their own agendas which they promote through deceptive talk and flattery, easily influencing the minds of naïve people.

¹⁹Your obedience to the Lord is well known everywhere and this causes me to rejoice over you. However, you still need to be wise and focus on what is good, so that you do not allow any form of evil among you.

²⁰Satan will soon be crushed beneath the feet of the God of peace. Meanwhile the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with you.

²¹Timothy is working faithfully with me and sends his greetings to you all, along with Lucius, Jason and Sosispater, more of my relatives.

²²(Paul dictated this letter to me, Tertius, and I also greet you in the Lord).

²³The whole church where I am now enjoys the hospitality of Gaius, who is also caring for me. They all send their greetings, as do Erastus, the city's director of public works, and another brother, Quartus.

²⁴May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be imparted to you all.

²⁵Above all else I want to give glory and honour to Him who has the power to keep you well grounded in my gospel and the revelation of who Jesus Christ is, that mystery that was formerly hidden for such a long time. ²⁶All that was prophesied about Him is now made known because this has been the will of the eternal God. He has commanded this so that all nations may now believe and obey Him. ²⁷He is the only God and is wise in all the ways He works. To Him belongs all the glory forever through Jesus Christ. Amen! It shall be so!