

Week 2 begins:

1:1-17

Note: The numbered footnotes are mine. The “lettered” footnotes are those of the NRSV translators.

NRSV¹ Text with N.T. Wright’s Outline from the New Interpreters Bible²

I. Romans 1:1—4:25, The Faithfulness of God

A. 1:1-17, Opening Statement of Theme: God’s Gospel and God’s Righteousness

What are the stories implicit in Paul’s six-verse-long opening sentence? How does it prepare you for what lies ahead? How would you summarize Paul’s vocation? An “apostle” is someone who has been sent forth with a specific commission. What is Paul’s?

“the obedience of faith” . . . What do you think this means? How might it be a summary of what we Christians are about? How is it a summary of Jesus’ own story?

Paul is “called to be an apostle.” The letter’s recipients in Rome are “called” to be saints (meaning, believers). Who is doing the calling? This is referred to as the “divine passive.”

1:1-7, God’s Gospel and Paul’s Ministry

Paul, a servant^a of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit^b of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name,⁶ including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

² Volume X of the New Interpreters Bible, Abingdon Press, 2002.

^a Gk *slave*

^b Or *Spirit*

The gospel (v. 3, 9, and 15), God's gospel, is a message, a proclamation, about God's son. In the Greek, it is the evangelion theou.

The categories "Greek" and "barbarian" encompassed all humankind, just like "Jew" and "Gentile." All non-Greek speakers were "barbarians," which included many Jews.

V. 16-17 are crucial to all that follows. God's proclamation of his Son is the "power of salvation" for all those who place their faith in Jesus. Jesus' ministry of faithful obedience even to the cross reveals God's own faithfulness. This is the crux of Paul's defense of the righteousness of God.

"Revealed" is the Greek apokalyptetai. This is both an unveiling of the true reality and the event that brings it about.

1:8-15, Paul's Desire to Come to Rome

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. ⁹ For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel^c of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, ¹⁰ asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I want you to know, brothers and sisters,^d that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish ¹⁵—hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

1:16—17, The Gospel Unveils God's Righteousness

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."^e

^c Gk my spirit in the gospel

^d Gk brothers

^e Or *The one who is righteous through faith will live*

Week 3
begins:
1:18-3:31

B. 1:18—3:20, The Challenge for God’s Righteousness: Gentiles and Jews Alike Under God’s Wrath, Guilty of Idolatry and Wickedness

1:18-32, Idolatry and Dehumanized Behavior Resulting in God’s Wrath

Picture a courtroom. The first to stand trial are the Gentiles, all those who have lived outside the covenant with God.

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; ²¹for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools; ²³and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

The humans know right from wrong, but they choose to do what is wrong. Though a glance out the window reveals the creator, they worship themselves rather than the creator.

²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, ²⁷and in

Paul uses homosexual behavior as an example of the tragic choices humans make. For the Jews, such sexual behavior was completely unacceptable and against the law of Moses. Note – there is nothing here about sexual orientation, a concept that is relatively recent. The focus here is on what one does.

Like a courtroom lawyer, Paul piles on the evidence. This long laundry list of all the ways humans do not love one another is not meant to be exhaustive. Notice that, at the end, Paul again emphasizes that we violate our own consciences – we do what we know is wrong.

The verdict on ALL the Gentiles is guilty, despite our failure to see in ourselves what we so quickly condemn in others. Does anyone really want the truth to come out?

the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done.

²⁹ They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters,^f insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

2:1-16, God's Impartial Judgment Leaves No Room for Moral Superiority

Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. ² You say,^a “We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth.” ³ Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches

^f Or God-hated

^a Gk lacks You say

of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ For he will repay according to each one's deeds: ⁷ to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

To call on an old cliché, we will reap what we sow. Failure to love and love well has terrible and eternal consequences. If God is love, we should not be surprised by this.

The judge is impartial. The evidence, the truth, will show all. The world must be put right. Those who do evil must face the judge: Jew and Gentile alike.

But if God has no favorites, then what about the Jews? What about the covenant? Wasn't it meant to get them out of this box? This paragraph seems to point right at the Jews in Paul's audience.

¹² All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. ¹⁵ They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.

2:17-29, The Direct Challenge to “the Jew”

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God ¹⁸ and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, ²¹ you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

²⁵ Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, ³ will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. ²⁹ Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the

This is where we’ve been headed. The Jews have a special God-given vocation, but they haven’t lived up to it. The bearers of the solution have become part of the problem. If theft, adultery, and the rest can be found in the people of God (Israel), then they cannot boast in their covenant and they cannot be the light to the world. How then can God’s covenant plan be fulfilled? The problem of Israel has become a problem for God.

Paul’s point here is crucial. True circumcision is a circumcision of the heart, not the body. Some Gentiles have done a better job of keeping the Law than the Jews have. Obviously, this implies a rethinking of what is meant by the “Law.” It has never been about all the outward and visible markers, it is about loving God and loving neighbor.

³See Ezekiel 36:27, about the Law being placed within people’s hearts. These secret/heart/spiritual people are those in whom the gospel about the Messiah has done its work. The promises of Ezekiel 36 have come true.

heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.

3:1-8, Israel's Faithlessness and God's Faithfulness

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews^a were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written,

“So that you may be justified in your words,
and prevail in your judging.”^b

⁵ But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), “Let us do evil so that good may come”? Their condemnation is deserved!

3:9-20, Torah Puts Jews in the Dock Alongside Gentiles

⁹ What then? Are we any better off?^c No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power

If Gentiles can keep the Law in their hearts and thus be “circumcised,” and, thus marked out as the people of God also, then what is the point of being Jewish??!! Paul provides only a single answer to this question: the Jews were given the “oracles of God.”

Paul's point is not so much the sin of Israel, as it is Israel's failure to be the light to the world, to carry out God's commission. The paragraphs are confusing, but the point is clear: Israel has failed but God will not!

The whole world stands deserving of condemnation – Jew and Gentile alike.

^a Gk they

^b Gk when you are being judged

^c Or at any disadvantage?

of sin,¹⁰ as it is written:

“There is no one who is righteous, not even one;

¹¹there is no one who has understanding,

there is no one who seeks God.

¹²All have turned aside, together they have become worthless;

there is no one who shows kindness,

there is not even one.”

¹³“Their throats are opened graves;

they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of vipers is under their lips.”

¹⁴“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ruin and misery are in their paths,

¹⁷and the way of peace they have not known.”

¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

Could Paul have been any clearer? None are righteous, none are faithful. So how will the covenant be kept? God will provide one faithful Jew who will represent all persons. Passages like this highlight the need to have a study Bible with all the cross-references, so you can see what texts Paul is quoting.

C. 3:21—4:25, God’s Faithfulness to the Covenant

3:21-26, God’s Righteousness Revealed Through the Faithfulness of Jesus

²¹ But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God⁴ has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, ²² the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ^d for all who believe. For there is no distinction, ²³ since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ they are now justified⁵ [“righteoused” – put right with God] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement^e by his blood, effective through faith.⁶ He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies [“righteouses” – puts in a right relationship with God] the one who has faith in Jesus.^f

We will spend some time with this explosive paragraph. God is righteous and will keep the promises he made – through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way out of the covenant dilemma. In a sense, Jesus is the “righteousness of God” in the flesh. Perhaps the most challenging truth claim is that God’s saving justice was unveiled, as Wright puts it, “once and for all in the death of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.” It is hard for many people to accept Paul’s claim that the climax of human history was 2,000 years ago.

⁴ The NIV has “righteousness from God” here. But that is certainly not Paul’s intended meaning. This passage is about God’s own righteousness, God’s covenant faithfulness. God’s righteousness is not and never will be the same thing as our righteousness. We will and do live in a right covenant relationship with God but we will not be God.

^d Translation note: I’ve put a version of the footnoted translation into the main text. The main reading in the NRSV is “through faith in Jesus Christ.” I expect this change to be made in the next “NRSV” translation, whenever that is undertaken. Regrettably, the NIV translation doesn’t even acknowledge this translation issue, though the newer TNIV has footnoted it in the same way as the NRSV. The translation, “through the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ” is now dominant among North American Pauline scholars, including Grieb, Keck, and Hays, as well as many others, including N. T. Wright.

⁵ Definition here is key. Justification is “God’s declaration that certain persons are members of the covenant people, that their sins have been dealt with. . . . Only faith can have this role, not because faith is a superior religious experience to anything else, nor because faith is an easier substitute for ‘works’ . . . but because faith – this faith, to be defined in 4:18-25 and 10:9 – is the appropriate human stance of humility and trust before the creator and covenant God, the stance that, only possible through grace, truly reveals the heart in which new covenant membership has been inscribed by the Spirit.” (N. T. Wright, commentary on Romans in the NIB)

^e Or a place of atonement.

⁶ Even here there are translation issues. Again the question is whether Paul is referring to the faithfulness of Christ or our faith in Christ. Is Jesus the object or the subject? Leander Keck suggests that the best translation would be: “through the faithfulness [expressed] in his blood.” I think that this translation is most in keeping with the rest of the paragraph. The focus here is on God, not on us.

^f Or who has the faith of Jesus. NOTE: Here, the footnoted translation is not preferred. Context is always essential to translation. Though the Greek is exactly the same as in 3:21, the context is not. Paul is speaking here of our faith in Jesus Christ. It is our faith in Jesus that marks us out as God’s people.

Paul returns to the Jewish “boast” that they are the covenant people and, therefore, not part of the condemned. But God is God of all and all those who have faith will be declared part of God’s covenant people.

**Week 4
begins
4:1-25**

Let’s review Paul’s argument so far. All the world stands deserving of condemnation – everyone, Jew and Gentile alike. However, in keeping with the covenant God made, and despite the unwillingness of the Jews to live up to the covenant and to be the light to the world, God has provided the means of covenant-keeping. This means is Jesus Christ, whose faithfulness reveals God’s righteousness and restores God’s covenant people to a right relationship with God. And who are these covenant people? Namely those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul sets out to demonstrate that beginning with Abraham, God had always intended that this reconciliation would include Gentiles and Jews and would be grounded upon faith.

3:27-31, One God, One Faith, One People

²⁷ Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

4:1-25, The Covenant Family of Abraham

4:1-8, Believing the Promise

What then are we to say was gained by^a Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵ But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. ⁶ So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;

⁸ blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin.”

4:9-15, Not by Circumcision, Not by Torah

⁹ Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, “Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.” ¹⁰ How then

^a Other ancient authorities read *say about*

Abraham was not Jewish when God made the covenant with him. He was uncircumcised and did not have the Law. He was just a guy. A guy who trusted his Lord. It was this trust that proved the wisdom of God's choice. It was always about this faith/trust. Faith would be the means by which God's promise to Abraham would be extended to all the world. It follows that even Abraham's physical family is not God's final goal. It is about faith, not DNA . . . as brought out by the wonderful story of Ruth, a Moabite who entered the people of God by virtue of her faith.

It has always been about grace and faith. Abraham responded in faith, leaving his extended family behind and moving to Canaan before he was given the sign of circumcision. God redeemed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt before he gave them the Law. Paul sets Abraham before us in plain view, but the story of the Exodus is not far behind it and will be brought to plain view later in the letter. Stories within stories within stories.

was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.

¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them,¹² and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.¹⁴ If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.¹⁵ For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

4:16-17, The Whole Family, According to the Promise

¹⁶ For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us,¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

4:18-22, The God Who Gives Life to the Dead

¹⁸ Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be."¹⁹ He did not

It comes down to this: Abraham trusted God even when it seemed to be an impossible promise. Faith grew upon faith, trust upon trust. And it is this faith that put Abraham right with God.

Finally, Paul gets to the “us.” Those who have this resurrection-shaped faith in Jesus Christ are “reckoned to be righteous;” i.e. declared to be part of God’s righteous covenant people. Thus, the question becomes, in whom have we placed our faith: the Jesus who was and is or a Jesus of our own construction?

**Week 5
begins
Chapters 5-8**

What God has accomplished at so steep a price, God will surely complete. Those who have been reconciled with God will be glorified – will share in the presence of God. Yes things can be hard, but after getting the Hebrews out of Egypt, God got them to Canaan despite all the twists and turns along the way. The story will end well.

weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already^b as good as dead⁷ (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith^c “was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

4:23-25, The Meaning of Christian Faith

²³Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe [‘faith’ as a verb] in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification [our ‘righteousing’].

II. Romans 5:1—8:39, God’s People in Christ as the True Humanity

A. 5:1-11, From Faith to Hope

5:1-5, Peace, Patience, and Hope

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we^a have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access^b to this grace in which we stand; and we^c boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we^d also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character

^b Other ancient authorities lack *already*

⁷ This links together God’s promise of children to the aged Abraham and Sarah with the resurrection of Jesus. God is the giver of life.

^c Gk *Therefore it*

^a Other ancient authorities read *let us*

^b Other ancient authorities add *by faith*

^c Or *let us*

^d Or *let us*

produces hope,⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

5:6-11, The Death of the Messiah and the Love of God

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.^e ¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Want to know what love is? Look to the cross. Jesus' death reveals the depth of God's love for us, undeserving enemies of God though we may be. What do you make of Paul's hard-nosed view of humanity? Those who view humanity as basically good but with a few problems have a difficult time with the biblical notions of sin and wickedness. Indeed, if all we need is a little fixing, then the biblical story doesn't make sense.

B. 5:12-21, From Adam to the Messiah

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—¹³sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will

Paul spells out the story of Adam and Jesus. One brought death, one life. One created the problem; the other is the solution. This is not just an aside or an illustration, it builds on what has come before. The problem of Adam was in the letter's background before, but now Paul spells it out. In the struggle between the rival kingdoms of sin and grace, it will be grace that reigns (exercises dominion) over those who are justified.

^e Gk the wrath

those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

5:18 completes the unfinished statement of 5:12. Try reading it that way.

¹⁸Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification^f leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. 6:1-23, Baptism and Freedom

6:1-11, Dying and Rising with the Messiah

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This takes an expansive understanding of baptism. Paul's focus here is on our status before God. In baptism, we have died and risen with Christ. Our old selves have been crucified and we are no longer enslaved to Sin and Death. We are "dead to sin and alive to God." We are "in Christ." What is true of Jesus, has become true of us. He is our representative Messiah.

For Paul, baptism is a fresh crossing of the Red Sea, a New Exodus. It is the crossing over from slavery to freedom, from death to life (see 1 Cor. 10:2 and Colossians 1:13-14 also). And remember, children and infants were part of the Exodus; they too were taken out of slavery.

^f Or righteousness

6:12-14, The End of Sin's Reign

¹²Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³No longer present your members to sin as instruments^a of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments^b of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

6:15-23, Slavery and Freedom

¹⁵What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations.^c For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are in Christ and we are to act like. We are to be the righteous instruments of our righteous God. We are to be faithful as God is faithful. Sin cannot hold us, for we have left that kingdom for the kingdom of God, we have left Egypt for Canaan.

The law enters the discussion here (v. 15) because it is part of the Adam-sphere and has been left behind.

Do you see Paul's continued use of the slavery language? This further illustrates that he has in mind the story of the New Exodus, which, of course also ties into the Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. In this sense, both baptism and Holy Communion speak to the same truth of a kingdom left behind and a kingdom gained.

The wages of sin is death because Adam's sin led to their expulsion from the garden and their loss of access to the tree of life.

^a Or weapons

^b Or weapons

^c Gk the weakness of your flesh

D. 7:1—8:11, The Life the Law Could Not Give

7:1-6, Coming Out from Under the Law

Do you not know, brothers and sisters^a—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during that person’s lifetime? ² Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. ³

Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

⁴ In the same way, my friends,^b you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

7:7-12, The Arrival of the Law: Sin Seizes Its Chance

⁷ What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived ¹⁰ and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹

A challenging part of Paul’s perspective is that the law plays an active part in “arousing” sinful desires. How could this be?

Perhaps it is like a parent telling a child that they can do anything they want except go into a certain closet (the one housing the deadly spider). That instruction arouses in the child a burning desire to drop everything and go into that closet.

But we no longer live under the law, indeed, we have died to it so that we might be Christ’s. This does not negate or contradict Jesus’ teaching that we are to love God and love neighbor, the heart of the law.

It isn’t that the law is bad. It simply allows us to see our relationship-destroying desires and behaviors for what they are – and can even awaken them. But the law is God’s and this cannot be “sin” in itself.

The “I” here is not autobiographical, it is Paul’s way of identifying with those who live between the old Exodus and the New Exodus; i.e., those who live under Torah. It is a rhetorical “we.” When the law came on the picture, miscellaneous sin became trespass.

^a Gk brothers

^b Gk brothers

The picture is taking shape: “(a) sin and the law are quite distinct; (b) sin has taken over the law, the law that promised life; and (c) using a base of operations, sin has produced the opposite of that which the law promised.” (Wright)

If the previous section was about the past, what happened when the Torah came to Israel, this one is about the present. What is it like trying to live under Torah? This section explains the tragedy of Israel – given the Law but unable to keep it. This is what we earlier called the “problem of Israel” that became God’s problem.

Sin is always waiting to pounce. Those living under Torah know they are privileged to be the ones given the law, but still, they are wretched, for they simply cannot keep it . . . and they know it. They are not ignorant. So what can be done? God’s rescue through Jesus Christ.

For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

7:13-20, Living Under the Law: Sin Works Death

¹³ Did what is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.^c ¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

7:21-25, Reflecting on the Law: God’s Law and Sin’s Law

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

^c Gk sold under sin

8:1-11, God Gives Life Through the Son and the Spirit

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit^a of life in Christ Jesus has set you^b free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin,^c he condemned sin in the flesh,^d so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.^d ⁵ 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^e set their minds on the things of the Spirit.^f ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit^g is life and peace. ⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot,⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit,^h since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spiritⁱ is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ^j from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through^k his Spirit that dwells in you.

Because of what God has done (v. 3 and 4), there is no condemnation for those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Verses 3 and 4 are where Paul has been heading all along. The earlier hints have come to full flower here. These verses are a synopsis of this section, the letter, and Paul's theology.

Notice that in v. 3, God has condemned sin, pronounced judgment on it. It helps the reading here a bit to see sin, as Sin. As Wright puts it, Sin is the villain in this drama. For Paul, Sin is a personified force at work in the work and in humanity. This force has now been condemned. It is essential to Paul to grasp that even though we still commit bad acts, we are no longer in the grip of Sin, no longer enslaved to it. Those chains have been broken. The Egypt of Sin is behind us, back across the Red Sea of baptism. Now, the Spirit leads us through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

^a Or *spirit*

^b Here the Greek word *you* is singular number; other ancient authorities read *me* or *us*

^c Or *and as a sin offering*

^d Or *spirit*

^e Or *spirit*

^f Or *spirit*

^g Or *spirit*

^h Or *spirit*

ⁱ Or *spirit*

^j Other ancient authorities read *the Christ* or *Christ Jesus* or *Jesus Christ*

^k Other ancient authorities read *on account of*

E. 8:12-30, The Inheritance Guaranteed

The Egypt of Sin is behind us, back across the Red Sea of baptism. Now, the Spirit leads us through the wilderness to the Promised Land, as the glory of God once led the Israelites through Sinai. We are not to fall back into our slavery sin, to return to Egypt, but to press on confident that we are God's children and joint heirs with Christ.
Alleluia!

8:12-17, Led by the Spirit

¹² So then, brothers and sisters,¹ we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba!^m Father!” ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witnessⁿ with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

8:18-30, The Renewal of All Things

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in^o hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes^p for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

It is not only we who await (patiently!, v. 25) the Promised Land, the renewal of all things, even creation waits with bated breath. Israel's problem has been humanity's problem has been all of creation's problem and now God has achieved our redemption (slave-market language) and even the redemption of our physical bodies. As Christ was raised, so shall we be raised. As Christ was raised, so shall all of creation be renewed.

¹ Gk *brothers*

^m Aramaic for *Father*

ⁿ Or ¹⁵ *a spirit of adoption, by which we cry, “Abba! Father!”* ¹⁶ *The Spirit itself bears witness*

^o Or *by*

^p Other ancient authorities read *awaits*

The Spirit not only leads us through the wilderness, he helps and sustains us, articulating what we cannot. This is Spirit-inspired and even Spirit-spoken prayer. Paul knows that we, like him, are weak – so does God.

Don't see Paul's use of "predestined" here as meaning the negation of your choice. God has chosen and we choose in God's glorious calculus of grace and love.

All I really want to say here is "Enjoy!" Since God's love has done for Christians what God did for Christ, there is nothing that can shake this apart or keep us from God's love. This is why, when we speak of Christian hope, the best synonym is "confidence," for God is the great promise-maker and the great promise-keeper.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes^q with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God,^r who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit^s intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.^t

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good^u for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.^v ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

F. 8:31-39, Nothing Will Separate Us from God's Love

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.^w ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor

^q Other ancient authorities add *for us*

^r Gk *the one*

^s Gk *he or it*

^t Gk *according to God*

^u Other ancient authorities read *God makes all things work together for good, or in all things God works for good*

^v Gk *among many brothers*

^w Or *Is it Christ Jesus ... for us?*

rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Week 6
begins
Chapters 9-11**

After the emotional climax of chapter 8, it is as if Paul's emotions have been laid bare. He now turns to the overhanging question of God's justice and faithfulness: What about the Jews? Paul would cut himself off from God if, by doing so, he could bring his fellow Jews to faith in Jesus Christ

Does the arrival of Jesus and the entrance of Gentiles mean that God has changed plans? Has God moved to a new covenant and abandoned the old one? Are there to be two covenants? Paul's response is an emphatic "No!." The Word of God has not failed. This is Israel's story, but it is the covenant promise that matters, not DNA. Ishmael bore Abraham's DNA, but he was not the child of the promise.

III. Romans 9:1—11:36, God's Promises and God's Faithfulness

A. 9:1-5, Paul's Grief Over Israel's Failure to Believe, Despite Being Promise Bearer

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit—² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people,^a my kindred according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises;⁵ to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah,^b who is over all, God blessed forever.^c Amen.

B. 9:6-29, The Story of Israel, from Abraham to the Exile, Displays God's Justice in Judgment and Mercy

⁶ It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel,⁷ and not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants; but "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you."⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants. ⁹ For this is what the promise said, "About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son."¹⁰ Nor is that all; something similar happened to Rebecca when she had conceived children by one husband, our ancestor Isaac. ¹¹ Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue,¹² not by works but by his call) she was told, "The elder shall serve the younger."¹³ As

^a Gk my brothers

^b Or the Christ

^c Or Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever; or Messiah. May he who is God over all be blessed forever

Paul's emphasis on God's freedom to choose can fall hard on our ears. Why Isaac and not Ishmael? Why Jacob and not Esau? Because God chose and God is . . . well . . . God! Is God then unjust? Of course not, God is merciful but God is also free. It is not some dispassionate "fairness" that we ought to seek from God, but mercy and compassion. Think back to chapter 2.

Ok then. Still . . . If it is all God's doing and God's choosing, then how can God find fault in anyone; namely, in the Jews who reject Paul's message – or those today who deny the gospel? As Leander Keck puts it, aren't we then all just victims of an arbitrary deity? Paul doesn't really answer the question, he just denies our right to ask it. Who are we to question God? Who is on trial here? Humanity or God? Many people want to believe only in a god who matches up with their judgment about who a god should be or what a god should do.

it is written,

“I have loved Jacob,
but I have hated Esau.”

¹⁴What then are we to say? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵For he says to Moses,

“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

¹⁶So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. ¹⁷For the scripture says to Pharaoh, “I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” ¹⁸So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.

¹⁹You will say to me then, “Why then does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? ²²What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; ²³and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’
and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ ”

²⁶“And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’
there they shall be called children of the living God.”

²⁷And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will

These quotations from Hosea and Isaiah show that Paul has not been speaking about any individual's salvation, but about groups: peoples and remnants.

be saved;²⁸ for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively.”^{d 29} And as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of hosts had not left survivors^e to us,
we would have fared like Sodom
and been made like Gomorrah.”

C. 9:30—10:21, God's Covenant Faithfulness Revealed in the Messiah

9:30-33, Faith, Works, and the Stumbling Stone

³⁰What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; ³¹but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. ³²Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³as it is written,

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall,
and whoever believes in him^f will not be put to shame.”

10:1-21, God's Righteousness and the Worldwide Mission

Brothers and sisters,^a my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end [*telos*

Wright argues that to understand Paul in 9-11, we have to keep in mind the larger story. God always intended that the promise made to Abraham would be for the benefit of all people. But Sin had to be dealt with. Torah concentrated Sin in one place (the Law turned general sin into trespass), upon one people where it could be dealt with. Ultimately, Sin was focused upon one person, Jesus, who, as representative Messiah, took the Sin of all upon himself. Thus, Torah can only be kept on the basis of faith, not works. This is the work of a righteous God on a worldwide mission.

^d Other ancient authorities read *for he will finish his work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make the sentence shortened on the earth*

^e Or *descendants*; Gk *seed*

^f Or *trusts in it*

^a Gk *Brothers*

Torah has done its job. Jews can no longer cling to their mistaken notions of national privilege. The defining event, Jesus' death and resurrection ushering in the New Age, has occurred and the only question now is whether we will believe in the truth of this claim and, thus, place our trust in Christ. Paul's point is that this is as true for the Jews as it is for the Gentiles. There are not two covenants but only one, with this dramatic event bringing it to fruition.

Be sure to read the footnote to 14b. This passage ought to humble every preacher of the Gospel. Clearly, there is more to preaching than we usually imagine!

in the Greek⁸] of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

⁵ Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.”⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say?

“The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart”

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);⁹ because^b if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.”¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.¹³ For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard?⁹ And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?¹⁵ And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring

⁸ *telos* conveys “completion, consummation, wholeness.” Paul is saying that Christ was the goal of Torah, the Law. Jesus’ bearing the Sin of Israel and, hence, the world was the point all along and the reason that Torah in its goodness was given. The word order in Greek is, “For the end of the law is Christ . . .” This verse (10:4) is a key to the passage and the letter. As Wright puts it, Christ is the climax of the covenant.

^b Or *namely, that*

⁹ The Greek here is actually, “believe *one* whom they have never heard.” It is Christ who speaks through the preaching of the gospel; he is not merely the subject of the preaching. The next question is, “How are they to hear [him] without a proclaimer?” As Leander Keck notes, faith is elicited by the Christ, not the preacher. It is God who saves, not us! (See also 2 Cor. 5:20 and 1 Thess. 2:13 on this. You can also look back to Romans 1:16 – the gospel, the proclamation, *is* the power of God for salvation, it is not just about the power.)

Paul has been carrying this gospel across the Mediterranean and Gentiles have responded to what they have heard proclaimed. Perhaps it is Gentile belief that will make Paul's fellow Jews jealous (10:19) and enable them to hear and believe for themselves.

Paul's fellow Jews may not be responding in faith to the Good News, but God is faithful and will not give up.

Paul rejects the notion that God has rejected the Jews. Paul himself is a prime example of God's faithfulness. There has always been a remnant of the faithful and there is a remnant even now—chosen by grace. You'll see that Paul never answers the logical question of how God's choosing can be reconciled with human accountability. As Keck notes, there is no answer in the Bible or elsewhere. It simply is an "and," not an "or."

good news!"¹⁶ But not all have obeyed the good news;^c for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.^d

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for

"Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends of the world."

¹⁹ Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,

"I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;
with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

"I have been found by those who did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for
me."

²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

D. 11:1-36, The Salvation of "All Israel" in Fulfillment of God's Unbreakable Promises

11:1-10, God Has Not Rejected Israel

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."⁴ But what is the divine reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.⁶ But if it is by

^c Or gospel

^d Or about Christ; other ancient authorities read of God

grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.^a

⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,⁸ as it is written,

“God gave them a sluggish spirit,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day.”¹⁰

⁹ And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and keep their backs forever bent.”

Though the enduring remnant is the evidence that God has remained faithful, Paul condemns unbelieving Israel in harsh words. We are back to the mystery of Israel’s hardening.

Israel’s “stumbling” (“trespass” in the Greek) is that they have not achieved what they sought. Yet, it has led to the bringing in of the Gentiles, which has always been God’s intention. Now, Paul anticipates (hopes!) that the unbelieving Jews will be jealous and come back to the family, standing alongside Paul and the other believing Jews.

11:11-32, “All Israel” Will Be Saved

¹¹ So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling^b salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel^c jealous. ¹² Now if their stumbling^d means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry¹⁴ in order to make my own people^e jealous,¹¹ and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead! ¹⁶ If the part of the dough

^a Other ancient authorities add *But if it is by works, it is no longer on the basis of grace, otherwise work would no longer be work*

¹⁰ This is actually a collage of bits from OT quotations. A Bible with lots of cross-references is a big help.

^b Gk *transgression*

^c Gk *them*

^d Gk *transgression*

^e Gk *my flesh*

¹¹ The Greek here is more about hope than certainty. Paul hopes to make his fellow Jews jealous but he is not certain of the outcome.

In the midst of God's work among the Gentiles and the unbelieving Jews, the Gentile Christians must not see Israel's "stumbling" as reason for any feelings of superiority. The Gentiles' salvation is bound up with Israel's. There is not one covenant (the new) which replaces another (the old) and there are not two covenants running alongside each other. There is one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one baptism . . . one covenant for Jew and Gentile alike.

This is not about "Jews converting to Christianity." Paul could never have thought in those terms. Besides, it is the Gentiles who are grafted in. They are the ones coming to a new religion. Paul doesn't see himself as having a new religion, but a reconfigured one – reconfigured around Jesus Christ. Though Paul is missionary to the Gentiles, his hope is that his fellow Jews will yet come into the family of Christ, that the broken off branches will be rejoined to the tree.

offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy.

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root^f of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹ You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you.^g ²² Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³ And even those of Israel,^h if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

²⁵ So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters,ⁱ I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel¹² will be saved; as it is written,

"Out of Zion will come the Deliverer;
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob."

²⁷ "And this is my covenant with them,

^f Other ancient authorities read *the richness*

^g Other ancient authorities read *neither will he spare you*

^h Gk lacks *of Israel*

ⁱ Gk *brothers*

¹² Paul is speaking here of the new Israel, those who belong to the Messiah, as opposed to ethnic Israel. It is not necessary to think Paul believes that all Jews will come to faith, just as he undoubtedly thinks that not all Gentiles will come to faith.

The means of salvation for the non-believing Jews is this process of jealousy and desire – the Jews wanting to be at the party. NT Wright wisely observes the connection to the story of the prodigal son and the jealousy of the older brother. Does the older brother return to love of father and brother? Will Israel return to God’s grace and mercy? Bishop Wright also aptly notes that one of the Christian church’s many sins is that we, too often, fail to throw a party that people would want to attend.

**Week 7
begins**

12:1 – 15:13

Note the “therefore” in 12:1. Paul is not done. The “fellowship of faith” must embody the “righteousness of faith. As Wright puts it, theology and ethics are the breath and blood of life.

when I take away their sins.”

²⁸ As regards the gospel they are enemies of God^l for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; ²⁹ for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now^k receive mercy. ³² For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

11:33-36, Praise to the All-Wise God

³³ O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴“For who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵“Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

IV. Romans 12:1—16:27, God’s Call to Worship, Holiness, and Unity

A. 12:1-2, The Worship of Body and Mind

I appeal to you¹³ therefore, brothers and sisters,^a by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual^b worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world,^c but be

^j Gk lacks *of God*

^k Other ancient authorities lack *now*

¹³ When it is first used in a letter, this “I appeal to you” phrase (*parakalo* in the Greek) always introduces the essence of Paul’s letter. View it as the mountaintop of this letter – the “theology” and “ethics” are both part of this single mountain.

^a Gk *brothers*

^b Or *reasonable*

^c Gk *age*

We can view 12:1-2 as a picture of humanity that has been restored from the wreckage of chapters 2 and 3, accomplished by the work of Christ.

transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.^d

B. 12:3-13, Unity, Love, and Community Living

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.⁴

For as in one body we have many members¹⁴, and not all the members have the same function,⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith;⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching;⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.^e ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

C. 12:14—13:7, The Church Facing the Outside World

12:14-21, Christian Living Amid (Possibly Hostile) Outsiders

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;^f do not claim to be wiser than you are.¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.¹⁸ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably

Don't separate all this into simply "is" and "ought," anymore than we can separate "theology" and "ethics." We are a community unified in and by Christ, living and acting in love. This is who we are – now we must act like! Thus, Paul shows ways in which we can build up the community. The emphasis is on the "we" not the "I."

We live in an increasingly hostile culture, so perhaps these thoughts are now more relevant to Christians than they've been awhile. Yet, I read and hear far too many Christians who respond to hostility with more hostility.

^d Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

¹⁴ Paul means here the parts of a body, not membership in a club or society.

^e Other ancient authorities read *serve the opportune time*

^f Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*

with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God;⁸ for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Few Scripture passages have been as misused as this one. Too often, it has been used to justify tyranny and terror on the part of rulers and authorities. The best way to understand this chapter is to go back to the opening chapters, where Paul traced the darkness that plagues humanity. Governments and human authority are needed to restrain the worst in us. Still, this passage is not endorsing all governments nor is Paul demanding blind obedience to tyranny. Further, it is possible that Paul is giving long-recognized advice to his fellow Jewish-Christians about functioning in the diaspora.

13:1-7, God’s Call to Obedience to the Authorities

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; ⁴ for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority^a does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. ⁶ For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, busy with this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

This passage ought to give pause to those who claim that Paul distorted Jesus’ simple message. This Jesus-echo is loud and clear!

D. 13:8-10, Love Fulfilling the Law

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore,

⁸ Gk the wrath

^a Gk it

love is the fulfilling of the law.

Paul returns to the eschatological focus of his letter. Time is short and we need to live like it, not forgetting about tomorrow or failing to make plans, but living with others in love, honor, and respect . . . as if Jesus' might tap us on the shoulder in the next minute.

E. 13:11-14, Living by the Rising Sun

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As the outline indicates, Wrights suggests that this begins one long section, culminating in the theological climax of the letter (15:7-13).

F. 14:1—15:13, God's Call to Unity of Life and Worship Across Barriers of Custom and Ethnic Identity

14:1-12, Judging and Being Judged

Welcome those who are weak in faith,^a but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord^b is able to make them stand.

Christians are certainly not exempt from the human tendency to divide and to separate. How we love all the minutia we use to separate Christians into the "right and the wrong." Some of our differences are important, but Paul calls for us to remember that we are one in Christ Jesus.

⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

^a Or conviction

^b Other ancient authorities read *for God*

In Christ's death and resurrection we have been made one. Who are we to allow "in-house" disagreements to divide and weaken our fellowship? Jesus is Lord of us all and in his lordship we find our unity. We are so quick to condemn others when the judgment of us all belongs to God.

This strongly echoes similar passages in Corinthians, where the issue is whether to eat meat sacrificed to idols and, if so, where. The issue may be the same here. Paul believes that eating such meat is ok, for there are no other gods . . . it's just meat. But Paul will abstain himself if eating would cause a believer who thinks the meat is unclean to eat it and violate her conscience. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is far bigger than what we eat or drink, though you'd hardly know it listening to many Christians.

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?^c Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?^d For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.^e ¹¹For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to^f God.”

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.^g

14:13-23, Conscience and the Kingdom of God

¹³Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.^h ¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵If your brother or sisterⁱ is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. ¹⁹Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. ²⁰Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others

^c Gk *brother*

^d Gk *brother*

^e Other ancient authorities read *of Christ*

^f Or *confess*

^g Other ancient authorities lack *to God*

^h Gk *of a brother*

ⁱ Gk *brother*

fall by what you eat; ²¹ it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister^j stumble.^k ²² The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. ²³ But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith;^l for whatever does not proceed from faith^m is sin.ⁿ

Our actions are to be the outworkings of our faith. If they are not, then they separate us from God, they are sin. The point is not pleasing ourselves but about doing that which builds up the community. We are to welcome one another so that we may live out in unity what Christ has created.

15:1-13, Mutual Welcome, Based on the Messiah

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. ³ For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” ⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will confess^a you among the Gentiles,

^j Gk *brother*

^k Other ancient authorities add *or be upset or be weakened*

^l Or *conviction*

^m Or *conviction*

ⁿ Other authorities, some ancient, add here 16.25-27

^a Or *thank*

Here, what has been implicit – unity among the Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians in Rome -- becomes explicit. Paul quotes Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah to make his point. From the beginning, God’s purpose has been to bring all peoples into his family – Jew and Gentile alike. There is no ethnic or geographic privilege. Note that Paul is explicitly Trinitarian in this.

**Week 8
begins
15:14 – 16:27**

The Christians in Rome are few, as they are everywhere, but Paul is confident in them and he expects that his work as minister to the Gentiles will propel him onward to Spain. Paul also speaks here of his own work. He has fully proclaimed the Gospel of Christ. How much of present-day preaching is aimed at therapy rather than this proclamation?

and sing praises to your name”;

¹⁰and again he says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”;

¹¹and again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples praise him”;

¹²and again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

G. 15:14-33, Paul’s Apostolic Travel Plans

¹⁴I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters,^b that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. ¹⁵Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles¹⁵ may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. ¹⁸For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished^c through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God,^d so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum¹⁶ I have fully proclaimed the good news^e of Christ. ²⁰Thus I make

^b Gk *brothers*

¹⁵ This is a reference to the money that Paul has collected from the many Christian communities. He plans to take it to Jerusalem for the poor among the Christians there. There are several references to this collection in Paul’s letters. For example, see 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. This seems to be a practice of Paul’s aimed at demonstrating to skeptical Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem that the mission to the Gentiles is authentic and good.

^c Gk *speak of those things that Christ has not accomplished*

^d Other ancient authorities read *of the Spirit* or *of the Holy Spirit*

¹⁶ This is the Roman province on the eastern side of the Adriatic, where countries like Albania and Croatia are located now.

it my ambition to proclaim the good news,^f not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation,²¹ but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him shall see,
and those who have never heard of him shall understand.”

²²This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you ²⁴when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. ²⁵At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; ²⁶for Macedonia and Achaia¹⁷ have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. ²⁸So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected,^g I will set out by way of you to Spain; ²⁹and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing^h of Christ.

³⁰I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,ⁱ by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, ³¹that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry^j to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³²so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³The God of peace be with all of you.^k Amen.

Paul has been slow coming to Rome because he has been busy preaching the Gospel where it has not been heard. But now, Paul expects that his work as minister to the Gentiles will propel him from Rome to Spain after he finishes taking his collection to Jerusalem. In the meantime, he asks for the prayers of the Christians in Rome.

^e Or *gospel*

^f Or *gospel*

¹⁷Roughly equivalent to modern-day Greece.

^g Gk *have sealed to them this fruit*

^h Other ancient authorities add *of the gospel*

ⁱ Gk *brothers*

^j Other ancient authorities read *my bringing of a gift*

^k One ancient authority adds 16.25-27 here

H. 16:1-16, Commendation and Greetings

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon^a of the church at Cenchreae,² so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus,⁴ and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert^b in Asia for Christ. ⁶Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junia,^c my relatives^d who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. ⁸Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. ¹⁰Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. ¹¹Greet my relative^e Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. ¹²Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother—a mother to me also. ¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters^f who are with them. ¹⁵Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Let's focus on the women. First, we have Phoebe. The one to whom Paul entrusted with this very important letter and the one who would have expounded its contents for the Christians in Rome. Paul's calling her "deacon" shows that she is not merely a postal carrier. Paul met Prisca (Priscilla) on his first visit to Corinth (see Acts 18 and 1 Cor 16). Then we come to hard-working Mary. And on to Junia— "prominent among the apostles"—perhaps meaning those who have witnessed the resurrected Christ (see 1 Corinthians 9:1)! And there are still more women listed here.

Seeing here the range of women entrusted by Paul with substantial responsibilities informs our reading of Paul's comments about the role of women in the churches. If Paul wouldn't let a woman teach a man, why would he entrust this letter to a woman?

^a Or minister

^b Gk first fruits

^c Or Junias; other ancient authorities read Julia

^d Or compatriots

^e Or compatriot

^f Gk brothers

Yet again, Paul returns to the topic of unity. How much do we stop to think about it, much less live it out? Note the eschatological comment in v. 20. The claim of the new age's arrival in Christ's death and resurrection is always right behind the text.

Tertius is Paul's scribe. The fact is that we don't know the process by which Paul composed the letters in the New Testament.

We began with the revelation of the righteousness of God (1:17) and now end with the revelation of the mystery of the ages. This revelation is not a "what" but a "who" – Jesus, Lord and Messiah.

I. 16:17-20, Watch Out for Divisions

¹⁷ I urge you, brothers and sisters,^g to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. ¹⁸ For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,^h and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. ¹⁹ For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.ⁱ

J. 16:21-24, Greetings from Paul's Colleagues

²¹ Timothy, my co-worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.^j

²² I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord.^k

²³ Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.^l

K. 16:25-27, Concluding Doxology

²⁵ Now to God^m who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages²⁶ but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whomⁿ be the glory forever! Amen.^o

^g Gk *brothers*

^h Gk *their own belly*

ⁱ Other ancient authorities lack this sentence

^j Or *compatriots*

^k Or *I Tertius, writing this letter in the Lord, greet you*

^l Other ancient authorities add verse 24, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.*

^m Gk *the one*

ⁿ Other ancient authorities lack *to whom*. The verse then reads, *to the only wise God be the glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*

^o Other ancient authorities lack 16.25-27 or include it after 14.23 or 15.33; others put verse 24 after verse 27