

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

The book of Romans

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Romans," by William Newell
- "What the Bible Teaches, Romans," by F.E. Stallan
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

ROMANS 1:1

THE CALLING

Paul had no question in his mind as to where his obligation lay and as to what he was called to do. He was privileged to be a bond-servant of the One he had persecuted in the past. The work of a servant is to be ready at all times to do the bidding of the One we serve. It was the Savior who told Paul the areas of service he was to be employed in. He was to take the good news of redemption to the Gentiles. These people were included in the plans of God to gather a people for His name. He was going to make them a kingdom of priests.

As a commissioned apostle, his work was foundational in the spread of the Gospel and the foundation of the Church. Everything else in His life was set aside as he was separated unto the Gospel of God. The "Gospel of God" reveals who was the Author of the Gospel. This was no idea of a man or a group of people. God Himself is the Source of the Gospel message.

Each of us who have been saved by God's grace have received a calling in the work of God. Gifts have been given to us to fulfill the work God gave us. Paul was gifted as an apostle. That particular gift was foundational and is no longer one of the gifts to be used today. We need to be exercised before the Lord to be committed to the work we have been commissioned to do. He enables us to do what He expects of us by giving the abilities needed to accomplish that work. The furtherance of the Gospel of God is a work to which all Christians need to give their labor. Paul was involved in the beginning of this great work. We are to be involved in our day near the end of this age of the Gospel of the grace of God.

This was no small calling to do a simple task.
This was the call of a lifetime to do what the Master asked.
He was privileged to be a foundation stone in the Church of God.
The Lord Jesus had met him and commissioned him to preach the Word.

Whenever one is called to fulfill a special work -
It is an unspeakable privilege from which we dare never shirk.
We have been entrusted with truths that change human destinations
The Author of the Gospel uses us to bring the message of salvation.

Far be it from us to ever discount what we are called to do.
The results of our labor for Him won't be known until life is through.
But we know the Gospel of God has power to change people's lives.
So we continue to press on with our calling that we might receive the prize.

ROMANS 1:2

THE PROMISE

Long before Christ was born in Bethlehem, His Person and coming was foretold. The Old Testament scriptures were given that we might learn of our Lord Jesus Christ. The people of the Old Testament times were able to catch glimpses of the One who would come, right from the first prophecy made concerning Him in the Garden of Eden at the time of man's fall into sin and its wages. Not only the prophets but in all the holy scriptures, there are unfolded "things concerning Himself." The two who walked the road to Emmaus learned in all the scriptures where Christ was revealed to those who seek Him. Those scriptures are holy because they can be counted on to contain the truth. The promises made in those prophecies will all be fulfilled. Many have been already and all will be in God's own good time.

That is why it is important that we give attention to the Old Testament scriptures. Not only do we learn from those people of faith, we also learn from the mistakes of the people of God in those times. "These things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition..." We are well advised when we read through the books of Moses, the history of Israel, the poetic books, the psalms and the prophets to

learn all we can about the character and plans of the Lord God, so we can better serve Him in the work of the Gospel. As the New Testament unfolds to us the Gospel of God, we learn the importance of our work in furthering this message to the world of lost souls.

When God makes a promise, you can count on
A time when it will be fulfilled.
All the skeptics and unbelievers' doubts will be gone -
And the mouths of false prophets all be stilled -
When the Lord will be revealed in His glory.
And people will look on Him whom they scorned.
They will face the consequences of denying His-story,
And will join voice with all those who mourned.

It is not that they couldn't have been saved -
But they refused on Christ to believe.
God wasn't impressed with the road their good intentions paved -
He wanted them His Son to receive.
To not believe the Holy Scriptures of truth -
Is to deny the Word of the Holy God of heaven.
When we make them out to be of little worth;
We bypass the way our sins can be forgiven.

"Holy God my Father, when I consider the power of Thy Gospel to change the lives, hearts and the destiny of those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, it gives me a sense of unworthiness to be put in trust with the Gospel. Even last night when I heard of another man who was in the recent Gospel meetings professing to be saved, it moved me to praise. But it also impressed on me the importance of what we have been called to. Please keep me humbled and trusting in Thee alone to bring eternal blessing to those who trust Thy Son through the preaching of the Gospel to which we have been entrusted. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:3

THE SEED

The origins were promised long ago before the Lord Jesus Christ was ever born. David called the one who would be born of His seed according to the flesh, his Lord. Not his son - his Lord, his Master. He knew, and Abraham knew, and people of faith knew One was coming who would fulfill the promise of good news from God.

Now He had come, the Eternal Son of the Eternal God, was, and is forever, Jesus Christ our Lord. He was a descendant of David. The promise was One would sit on David's throne who would rule the nations and through Him all nations of the earth would be blessed. Jesus Christ was God in humanity, and at the same time never ceased being God. He was, and still is, the Lord of lords. "For to the end He died, and rose and revived, that He might be Lord." The Lord Himself was here, visible to human eyes, audible to human ears, touchable to human hands. He was the God-Man and hypostatic union is in Him alone.

The impact of this is felt all over the world wherever the Gospel is preached. Confession with the mouth that Jesus is Lord, is a fundamental part of being saved. With confidence placed in Him, a person testifies of personal faith in a Living Lord. In declaring the Gospel, we are telling people that the One who died for our sins and was buried, rose again and is the Lord of everyone that comes and trusts Him. This benevolent Master has committed Himself to us as our Savior. Now we commit ourselves to Him in glad obedience as our Lord. His "yoke is easy" and His "burden is light." The false gods and Satan himself put a hard yoke of bondage and burdens that ultimately break those under their control. Praise God for the great King who reigns over us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Perhaps David didn't know as well as we do what the promised Son would mean.
He through time-dimmed eyes would strain to see what we've already seen.
David's promised seed has come and through Him the kingdom of grace
Has already gained millions of citizens, all sinners, He has saved.

The blessings of the kingdom go way beyond the earthly tribe and nation.
From every kindred, people and tongue there are those who experienced salvation.
Through the accomplishment of this royal Person who is the Great I AM.
The day is coming when His Name and Person are revered in every land.

From the throne of David peace will come to this world torn by sin and strife.

When that day comes every person will know who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.
But until that time, we who own Him as Lord must His Lordship show -
That those who still in darkness dwell, the blessings of His grace may know.

“Father in heaven, I thank Thee for the promises of Thy Word that assure us of a day when there will be peace on earth and good will toward men. I have already experienced this blessing personally and am overjoyed when I hear of another coming to personal peace with Thee and good will toward others. I pray that these new citizens of heaven will display this to others so they too can be blessed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 1:4

THE SON

Following hard on the testimony of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ is the testimony of His deity. The central figure of the Gospel is Jesus Christ our Lord. The authentication of His divine nature is established when He was declared to be the Son of God with power when the Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead. He had power in Himself to lay down His life and take it again. The holiness of His Person and the divine Person of the Holy Spirit testifies even today as to the One who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. There is no doubt that when we tell people to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, we are directing them to the Supreme One of the universe - the Son of God with power.

He has power over all of creation for He made all things by the word of His power. He has power over all nations to set up or put down as He chooses. He has power to give and take life for He has the keys to life and death. He has power on earth to forgive sins. He has power to make the Gospel we preach effective in the souls of people for He has commissioned us to preach, and He has all power in heaven and earth. His Gospel that He told us to preach is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. So, we are confident that of His fullness have we received and can confidently proclaim His Gospel by the grace He gives us.

How is it possible to say what it means to know the Son of God?
He was declared by angels and His Father, now by those who know Him as Lord
To be the Son of the Highest, the Beloved Son of the Father.
And we who are blessed with His salvation testify too, wherever we gather.

We have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, we know Him as One alive.
The experience of faith in Christ as Lord comes from a new nature placed inside.
That power has created a desire for holiness, we want to be like Him.
Confidence and trust in the risen Lord are where our life of faithfulness does begin.

There has been granted without our asking the Holy Spirit within us to dwell
In these bodies of flesh in which we live so that we His truth can tell.
He gives us thoughts that form into words so that we declare to others
How they can come into the family of the forgiven and be linked with holy sisters and brothers.

We have been set aside for God out of the mainstream of humanity.
The downward course of the world's system seems to promote spiritual insanity.
But the difference in those who know the Lord is we know this is just the beginning
Of an eternal future that we share with Him and there will be no more sinning.

“Holy God, my Father, in reverence this morning I speak to Thee of Thy well - Beloved Son who is my Savior. I thank Thee for ever being willing to send Him to be the Savior of the world. I thank Thee He was willing to come - and was willing to die for me. I thank Thee for putting on Him my iniquities. I thank Thee for raising Him from the dead with all power still in Him. I thank Thee for the promise of His return. I pray I will never loose sight of Him today and that every day I will receive power to live for Him. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL.

He is the Son of God, of that there is no doubt.
The declaration is in place, that's what Romans is all about.
He is the Mighty God, but came by human descent;
And here unto the men of earth, the Gospel now is sent.

Not only as a human, but of David's royal line,
The Son of God eternally, He came to dwell in time.

From prophets of the ancient past, predictions were made clear;
When Jesus Christ came in the flesh, God was drawing near.

His death for our redemption, was indeed God's greatest act;
The Spirit of holiness declares, His resurrection's a fact.
His death and resurrection is the Gospel message's key;
Believing God's Word and trusting Him, we have life eternally.

Another fact's important for each of us to know,
By Christ's death and resurrection, God opened another door.
This is the door of grace and kindness that He poured out on us,
Through the name and work of Jesus, we are fully blessed.

“O God of all grace, the facts of Gospel truth are often ignored by many people but I pray that as we seek to preach the Gospel night after night, these will be made plain. May the messages You give us to speak, be applicable to those who come to hear. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 1:5

THE FAITH

There is a body of truth comprised of all the scriptures and the carrying out of them by those who believe and act upon them. The words of truth when acted upon in spirit and in truth make the Lord's people to be people of faith who commit themselves to "the faith." "The faith" is that which God has given us to know Him by and to give structure to our lives in a way that pleases Him. Truth is not just the information of what is right but is the corresponding of a statement with a fact.

Paul was gifted with apostleship by the grace of God given to him to carry out foundational work in the Church. When one has been gifted by God there is a reason behind that gift. He was to be obedient to the body of truth given to him by the Holy Spirit and was to take it to the Gentile nations for the Lord's name to be known by them. The Gentiles were to be obedient to "the faith" as well as the Jews. The body of truth they were to receive went way beyond the Old Testament scriptures. They included the truths of the New Testament that were put down in writing by the apostles and those who were in the foundation of the Church.

Now we are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The Corner Stone, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the One from which the truths of the faith are measured. We are not to be obedient to the traditions of men if they are not true to "the faith." The writings of the early Church fathers are just that - writings. They are not in the body of truth called "the faith." We are built on this foundation so that we too will be obedient to "the faith" and carry that message of truth to our generation. This has been going on since the times of the apostles and is God's method to still call the Gentiles to faith and to yield to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. His name is known all around the world by those who have put their personal faith in Him because of "the faith" which was delivered to them by obedient servants.

It may seem to be a little word that by many is discounted.
But the word "the" changes many mountains to one specific mountain.
When it comes in front of "faith" the meaning is all changed
From anything that we generally believe, to truth associated with Christ's name.

God did not intend us to be free-lances to believe whatever we choose.
His plan is to unify His people and each one to tell what he knows
To those around him or wherever he goes directed by gift and grace -
That each place the name of the Lord is spoken about, will continue in words of "the faith."

The family of God bears the name of the Lord and His characteristics too.
People may not pay heed to our words at first, but listen to the "Gospel according to you."
Then when they see "the faith" lived out it will move them to seek the Lord.
And they in turn will live out "the faith" as it is revealed in His Word.

So though one word may seem insignificant, it adds a lot of meaning
To the words we read in the Bible when from its pages we are gleaning
The thoughts and mind, and the will of God that we may grow thereby.
And to "the faith" we must be true, and the truth we will have to buy.

“Father, may Thy truth sanctify me to the extent that I will not get turned aside by differing opinions of those who try to show us some "new truth." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 1:6

THE CALLED

No longer are we independent. We have been identified as "the called" of Jesus Christ. No longer can we choose what we want to accept or reject. Those who are subject to "the faith," are "the called" of Jesus Christ. This is the highest possible calling. Some of "the called" came from idol worshipping religious forms to the Person of Jesus Christ. Some came from the skeptical schools of existentialism to "the faith" and are "the called" of Jesus Christ. Some are called from the doubts of agnosticism and atheism to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and are numbered among "the called" of Jesus Christ.

The heavenly delineation is given to Him in this context. He is the One from heaven who is now in heaven and is calling from the nations of the world a people for His name. Those He called belong to Him. They are identified by Him and are to live for Him. This is not some slight of hand or casual picking and choosing. "The called" belong to Jesus Christ by His sovereign choice. When their calling by the Gospel to hear and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ has brought them to faith in Christ, then we look back and see the marvelous grace of God to us in making us to be among "the called."

This was no insignificant act on the part of God and I should never consider anything that I might do to be insignificant. It may seem like that in my eyes and the eyes of other people, but when God calls us, any service He had in mind for us to accomplish for Him, has a noble purpose that can only be valued by Him. "Of His fullness have we received" and grace is given for grace needed to fulfill our God-given calling.

It may seem to have very little worth in my eyes or the eyes of men.
But I can't measure any calling of God by anyone else but Him.
He can do what He wants with me, the choice is His alone.
All I can be concerned with now is that the deed He wants accomplished is done.

He loved us because He chose to, not because we were a special prize.
When I look to the hole I was "digged" from, it serves to keep me down to size.
But by His grace He set His love upon me and called me by His name.
To be called a "Christian" is an honorable title I can bear without any shame.

Christians belong to Christ Jesus who lived here for a little time.
During the years of His life among men He left a standard sublime.
So the standard is set for holy living, His name and His honor we bear.
The purpose of His coming has been committed to us that we His Gospel will share.

There are many of us among the nations who are alive and well today;
Who have been "the called" of Jesus Christ and are traveling the heavenly way;
But the majority have gone on to be with the Lord, their bodies awaiting resurrection.
One thing we have in common with them is He called us unto sanctification.

They in their day, I in mine, we each have a role to fill.
The plans and purposes of God go on now and will continue still;
Until the final call comes from him and we with the dead arise -
And respond with glad "Hosannas" when we see Him in the skies.

"Father, the God of all grace: I thank Thee today for being among "the called" of Jesus Christ. I do not want to let Thee down in any way. May my heart and lips be opened to praise and testify. May my hands and feet be faithful in labor. May my eyes and ears be opened to receive Thy truth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:7

BELOVED OF GOD

These set-apart people from all over the world are not called perfect people, or very intelligent people, or famous people. They are "beloved of God" without strings attached. When he called us by the Gospel, there was nothing special in us to recommend us to the Almighty God. We are like those the Lord Jesus spoke about in a parable who were "poor, maimed, halt and blind," who lived out on the highways and byways. He loved us with a sovereign love that knows no limits.

Not only are we loved by God, but He has identified us as "saints:" those set apart to be a holy people. This is not sainthood bestowed because of some miraculous work done. This is not sainthood passed on to us from those who were used by God in some special work of the Lord. This is not passed on because we are

in saintly families or because we were born in a Christian country. This was an act of God's will to love us and call us to holiness because He is holy.

The common greeting of Greeks was "Charis," (grace) and the Hebrews was "Shalom," (peace). This was used by the apostle when greeting the believers at Rome. But here these two words mean a whole lot more than they would have normally conveyed. "Grace" links us with the Source of grace, God our Father. The gift of unmerited favor is so much more than a common salutation. "Peace" has come to us through the blood of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is far more than a casual "shalom" given in passing. This is the total well-being and security that has been provided for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. We are at peace with Him and through Him.

To many it may seem but a casual greeting -
Similar to those we give when a person we are meeting.
But this is so much more when we take note of the different persons.
These are the beloved of God, even though they were Romans
Who would be feared perhaps, and maybe despised by the Jews.
However, both Jews and Gentiles are those whom God did choose
To set His love upon and set them apart for Him -
To be god-like and holy, and separated from sin.

Their holy calling had nothing to do with their worldly station -
Nor was there any reason to love and call them because of their great nation.
God who is the Sovereign had a purpose to fulfill through them -
Even though they were going to be persecuted and tortured by cruel men.
Their calling was to shine as lights in a very dark and ungodly world -
And to tell out the Good News of the Gospel as befits a heaven-sent herald -
Who could identify with those who still lay in deep unholy darkness -
But would join the ranks of the redeemed when to the Gospel message they would
hearken.

These people were beloved of God, and so also are we.
God intends saintly people to be where other people can see
The results of His grace lived out in His own in daily situations -
And that grace brings a clear testimony because of their consecration
To God and His truth, His kingdom and His Church -
Their testimony is strengthened by God Himself who loves them so much -
And the peace they have has been purchased by the blood of the cross Jesus shed.
Now they are a new creation in Him, they are like those who are alive from the dead.

"Holy God my Father, I thank Thee for Thy grace that has been so bounteously supplied to this poor ungodly sinner. By Thy grace I have been saved. Now Thy grace is able to be not only experienced but demonstrated. Please enable me to demonstrate Thy grace today as I meet with people in various walks of life. If it is to demonstrate grace without words, I pray Thee to make it visible to those who need to see godliness. If it is to be words spoken, may they all be gracious words. May the peace I have through the Lord Jesus Christ be able to be seen in expressions and attitudes I display. May the peace of Christ be something people can see and learn from. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:8

I THANK MY GOD

I see Paul coming to God with a special interest in his prayer - that is the saints in Rome. Those faithful believers were living for God in the middle of one of the most ungodly cities in world at that time. There amidst all the moral and spiritual perversions of the idol-worshipping, sensual, materialistic people of that city were those who were salt and light to those around them. Living for Christ by faith in that place at that time was worth their lives. Coming to the throne of grace with thanksgiving comes one who has experienced similar pressures applied to him by those who oppose the Gospel. He knows what they are passing through as the news travels from place to place, and he thanks God for the reality of their faith.

How can I support my brothers and sisters who are standing for God in difficult places and in these difficult times? I can go to the throne of grace! There with thanksgiving for their faith in Christ, I can participate in their labors and sufferings by interceding on their behalf. As I pray for places like Mexico, Central America, South America, Africa, Asia, Europe and places all over the world, I become a fellow-laborer to the extent I enter into their lives and difficulties. If I have chosen to avoid public testimony because of the fear of men, I cannot really participate with them in their testimony. If my interest in them is limited to a casual comment on

their behalf, I am probably not going to have much effect in my prayer. One thing I can do even if I don't know very much about what they are going through - I can give thanks for them. I am thankful that God has saved them and given them a concern for the souls of men, women and children in other places. I am thankful their testimony was such at home that they had the confidence of the Lord's people to send them to other places. I am thankful for those who listened to their testimony for the Lord. I am thankful that those saved by grace in those far away places have counted the cost and have come out openly for Christ in the places they live and are known. I am thankful for the multiplying principle that was practiced in the book of Acts, and works today in every place the Gospel is preached in fellowship with God. I am thankful that God's Word is not going to "return unto Him void" because of the faithful sowers of the Gospel seed world-wide. I thank Thee and praise Thee, O God, for Thy faithful people.

What is it about those people who live above the world,
That kept them to be faithful to God?
Some refused to conform to the world, and to the lions were hurled.
Because they unquestionably believed in God's Word.
Their faith was known by governors and kings,
Because to that evil they refused to submit.
By God's grace and power, they were able to bring
Evidence of true faith and did not abandon it.

They were people back then, like us who live in our time
And are pressured in many different ways.
Today the steel fist has a velvet glove covering the slime,
That is being used to turn us astray.
Now it is not to the lions they try to see us tossed -
It's into this world's slime pit of sinful pleasure.
To live by faith today still has its great cost -
This is where we find out what we truly treasure.

I stop to thank God for those who are young in the faith,
Their pressures are quite different from mine.
The contemporaries they meet with have very sensual tastes,
That gets increasingly worse with the passing of time.
Thanks be to God for the young believer who bows
His or her head to give God thanks and pray.
Thanks for the modesty and grace they can show,
When mixing with students in school each day.

I give thanks to God for business men and women
Who go daily into the world system to do business.
And have the testimony of integrity that adds to their business acumen
That makes them stand out as a moral success.
It is with thanksgiving to God I hear others say,
That person is one on whose word you can rely.
To have the reputation of fairness day after day -
Is a reference to character that money cannot buy.

I thank God for the mothers and fathers with families
They seek to raise in the fear of the Lord.
They are modeling their faith so each child sees
The reality of living by faith in God's Word.
When they see love modeled and hear words of grace,
It makes real what parents try to teach.
And when they hear the parents pray for them in faith -
They have been given a standard for them to reach.

Thanks be to God for the aged graceful saints
Who through all of the passing years;
Have maintained their testimony with a stately gait
That did not falter in spite of their fears.
They have left us an example that is easy to follow -
It is not hard for the rest of us to see
That their words of wisdom and teaching are not hollow;
They know what God intends us to be.

"Gracious Father, I thank Thee for all of these choice people in Thy family. What a privilege it is to be linked in faith with the company of the redeemed of the Lord. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

YOUR FAITH.

"Faith," that wonderful gift that God has given, makes it possible for mankind to connect with God. People think of faith in many different ways. It may mean being trustworthy or loyal. There are times when faith is used in common speech by people to mean a body of teaching, or a tenet, that they have accepted, which may be far from God's truth. When used in everyday terms, it is common for us to have faith in persons unseen, who may sign a check or document that can have a great effect on us or our actions.

To identify the faith of the Roman believers, that was spoken of throughout the whole Roman empire, we would need to go further in evaluating such impacting faith. There would have to be a fidelity that would show, which they have to the unseen Person on whom they had believed. There would have to be consistency in order for it not to be a point of mockery. They would have to be able to speak of their faith with credence, a genuineness that would make the unseen – reasonable. There would have to be confidence that was able to be observed when things were bad as well as good. It would be observable in the faces of those who spoke of love and answered prayer.

The faith of the Roman believers was an eminent faith – it was number one in order of life's priorities. They would have to talk about their faith with a passion rather than with an indifferent tone of voice. The people who heard about this would have to have been impressed with the witness of the observers in order for them even to give an ear to the spokespersons.

The general character of such faith would mean, God is evident in the life and work of those to testify to faith in Christ. It isn't the faith that saves but it is faith that leads us to the Object of our faith – the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith is transmitted to us by God Himself through His Word. The Holy Spirit makes that same word of truth understandable to us, and we put our faith in the Savior.

The general expectations of faith would be an evidence of confidence; an awareness of the reality of unseen things; a commitment to an unseen Person. It would be expected that if I had faith in a Living Christ, I would live my life no different than if He were visible beside me at all times. It would be expected that what His interests were, would be mine as well. The things that occupy His heart, would be the same in me. If He asked something of me, it would be expected that, in faith, I would quickly obey.

The general reputation of faith would be a sense of purpose and meaning in all that I do. If I believe in a Person, whether I am with them or not in a physical way, I will be conscious of the fact that all I do will affect their reputation as well. I will be careful to do not do anything that would dishonor the One in whom I have faith.

"O God of my salvation, I am here to represent Thee and Thy kingdom. This generation before which I live, has a very low estimation of the reality of God. I lift my eyes and heart to Thee above all of the visible, temporary things around me, and I thank Thee for the gift of faith. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:9

WITH MY SPIRIT

God knows what no one else ever will. He knows every aspect of my service from motive to plans; from plans to preparation; from preparation to action; from action to completion. When we serve Him with our spirit, there is no area of deception that can impose itself between the true servant and his or her God. The human spirit is motivated by a conscious desire to maintain our relationship with God in good standing. When we were spiritually dead there was nothing of lasting value that motivated us to serve God or even want to. But like Paul, when spiritual life was generated by the Holy Spirit, everything changed. There was an immediate desire on the part of the apostle Paul to act in service for God. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Paul served with his spirit in the Gospel of His Son because it is part of the new nature that comes alive when one is born of God. There is an inner desire to see souls saved and the people of God we have been given family love toward, are in our hearts that they might be blessed by God. Names of people and places arise in our minds, and our spirit is stirred in us to get on quickly with the ministry of reconciliation that God has given to us. The Holy Spirit opens our heart to intercede in prayer on behalf of those laboring in places we have not been called to. Names and faces rise before us and as we think of them, and mention them to the Father in prayer, our spirit is joined with His who has placed those dear ones where they are. We are able to participate with them at least to extent of emotionally and spiritually entering into their service.

God is there with us witnessing to our interest and degree of involvement. He makes what we cannot know on our own, real, as the Holy Spirit joins in the intercession with "groaning that cannot be uttered." The intercessory work of our Lord Jesus Christ takes the mere mention of a name and fills in the blanks that I leave in my prayers. He knows every breathing of my spirit and every need of the object of my prayer and in His sovereign grace, meets that need.

Within my spirit there arises a response to what the Holy Spirit selects.
And when my spirit is witnessing with Him, I respond to how He directs.
Whether it is service or prayer, study or speaking, staying or going some place.
Mt spirit within me will find no rest unless the path of His leading I trace.

There is something within me I cannot fully explain that came alive by the light of faith.
It is called my spirit, of this I am sure, because it always responds to God's grace.
That spirit that makes me aware of my God, and is moved at the sounds of His Word,
Is the integral part of my being that moves my soul and body to call Jesus, "Lord."

My spirit can be calm in His presence to learn and in that way absorb God truth.
It is often stirred to praise His name and declare what I know of His worth.
Sometimes my mouth is opened to sing aloud as my soul is moved by my spirit.
It doesn't really matter who else is around as long as my Father can hear it.

When sin is exposed whether in me or others, often my spirit is grieved,
Until the Word and will of God is applied, then my spirit is greatly relieved.
When guilt makes itself known my spirit immediately seeks a way to confess
Whatever it is that has severed me from the One who wants me to bless.

The awakened spirit is always conscious that I am a child of God.
It warns me and strives to keep me from evil and indulging in the sins of the world.
Faith feeds my spirit with the milk of the Word and then spiritual meat gives me added
strength.
And my spirit seems to glow with what God lets me know when I'm in fellowship with Him
at length.

Though I find it hard to fully define this spirit of mine, I know when it is alive and well.
It first came to breathe new life when I could see, Christ had died to save me from hell.
Now as I read God's truth and learn what is worth every effort to further tell of His grace.
My spirit finds meaning that is in no way demeaning, when there's a price to pay for my
faith.

**"O Gracious God, my Father: my spirit seems to be singing its silent songs of praise
and worship this morning. May every activity of this day have some meaningful
reason behind it and may my spirit be able to soar in holy fellowship with Thy Spirit.
In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

ROMANS 1:10

BY THE WILL OF GOD

What a blessing it is when a door of welcome opens to us. The request of Paul to go to Rome was answered, although in a way different from what he had anticipated. The means of accomplishing his calling to take the Gospel to Gentiles and to kings was not always made plain as to every step and stopping place on the journey. The overriding principle of Christian service never did get overlooked though, as he made his plans to fulfill his work. The will of God was the deciding factor as to how things would come to pass. A faithful servant can always count on a faithful God.

What would make a journey prosperous? There were obviously things to be done that would answer to the call of God and the will of God. Paul never lost sight of the "Gospel of God" having its Author to be God Himself. He was a man under authority with a clearly defined commission. He referred to his commitment to serve the "Gospel of His Son," the Subject of the Gospel. He knew what he preached was the "Gospel of Christ" so had no question as to the Power of the Gospel. To be able to declare that message under the guidance of God Himself, makes any journey prosperous.

In our calling we must never lose sight of the One who had called us and reveals to us His will. God is the Originator of the message of forgiveness by redemption that is contained in the Gospel. When we preach "Christ, and Him crucified," we are on the safe ground of the will of God. When we declare it is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," we are presenting what God wants people to know and are

opening the way for their blessing. Our plans must always have this caveat, "by the will of God." It is "God who worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."

There are places I would like to go and things I'd like to do -
But I know it would be wrong to act alone.
To the will of God, I must be true, as in this world I'm passing through -
Knowing that His will for me must be done.
A spiritual journey based on curiosity may deteriorate to verbosity -
If there is not the assurance this is right.
Words spoken sort of casually can end up bringing a casualty -
When there is darkness instead of light.

To want to do the right thing, may potentially some light bring -
If it is under the power of divine control.
But if it from my will only springs, there won't be much from it to sing -
That will bring blessing to the soul.
When God's will, is clearly known, the blessing of results are shown
To both the speaker and hearer of God's truth.
The seed when it has grown, will bring fruit when it is done -
And because it's His will, it's of great worth.

When God wants me to go, I believe He will let me know
By some means I can easily understand.
One way His will He can show, is events will seem to flow
In orderly fashion of events and by things at hand.
So, if I go or stay, there will always be a way
For me to be able to act in faith.
One does not go astray, or from God will be easily swayed
When the will of God through his life by God's grace we trace.

"Father, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven is my prayer today. Please keep me from wandering into ways that we are outside of the current of Thy will. I pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:11

SOME SPIRITUAL GIFT

Of great interest is the fact that when a person who has been saved by God's grace many important things took place without us even knowing it. It is God's intention that each believer be a part of the fellowship of saints for their own safety and the on-going benefit of being nurtured and taught by other Christians. Also there has been given to each of us a spiritual gift, and in some cases gifts, that we might be able to help and strengthen other believers. This remarkable plan God has designed makes possible the on-going work of His kingdom, as each believer with the gift God gave is able to meet the needs of others.

Paul realized that what God had given him could be used to strengthen and build up the believers in the church at Rome. To use what God gave him for the blessing of others was a deep-seated desire of this man. In the same way for us, it is necessary for us to understand spiritual gifts from God, from the Son and from the Holy Spirit have uses that He knows are needed. Where and how these are used is made plain to us by the will of God being our guide from day to day. This much we do know: the saints of God need each other and the wise follower of Christ will be aware of the needs of others around him or her. Gifts are not given for self-centered purposes, but for others-centered activity.

What a blessing it is when a sister gives what is needed to another who is wondering how that need could be met. When an encouraging word of exhortation is given cheerfully, people often rise to carry out, and accomplish a work that had been left undone. If teaching is given, believers are shown what to do, and in encouraging them, are shown how to do it. In the use of these spiritual gifts in accordance with God's will, the Lord's people are established in the faith and in life.

I wonder if there is some way today that I can help the Lord's people.
I know we will be meeting together to pray, and in that area we are all equal.
There is no need to be gifted to pray, that is our communion with God.
Every believer has access to His throne because the One sitting there is our Lord.

The struggles in life for those who are aged are different from those who are young.
Older people are striving to survive, the main work of their life is done.
There is a tendency for them to think they're shelved, there is nothing they can do.
When one is gifted with a word of encouragement, that lifts their spirits anew.

In the middle of a busy life of daily toil and the man for hours is gone.
His wife with young children may be overwhelmed with everything there at home.
A call from a gifted one may be just what is needed to change her whole outlook on life.
One call from a cheerful sister in the morning can make a difference to both husband and wife.

A student is far from home in a place where genuine Christians are few.
And pressure is being put on to conform to the ways of those who crowd around you.
Then comes a letter or email from one who has been over that same road before.
That heart of concern that moved them to write, strengthens the student to act in faith once more.

A young soldier in some place of deployment has made a choice with his life.
Part of what he has signed up to do is to preserve the lives of others in this time of strife.
In a package sent by one who cares about what is happening to him,
Is a book or two with some wise advice that keeps him away from sin.

There is a small assembly that has been there for years seeking to shine as a light.
But discouragement is growing because interest is small, they're ready to give up the fight.
Then a man and his wife, maybe a child or two, comes to join themselves to that place.
And the rejoicing remnant who had carried the torch, again is strengthened in faith.

Gifts that are used as God intended are a great benefit when they are applied.
We may not know the results of their use but the Holy Spirit does who in each one abides.
He will take what He has given and makes it effective for the reason He shall choose.
It is our responsibility to use what He's given, it's His responsibility that the gift will be used.

"Father, I am aware that from Thee, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, gifts have been given. I pray Thee to guide me to make sure that gift is operational and to show me where and how to use it for Thy glory this day. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:12

MUTUAL FAITH

It is plain to see the lives of believers are not only beneficial to each in that we have the fellowship of family, but the gift of each is needed. One ministers in a God-given way to others, and they minister to that one in return. God had gifted Paul to be an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles so the believers in Rome would have been built up in their faith and established in the truth of God by him. They would have shown him hospitality, mercy and comfort by those who were gifted to serve him.

In the assemblies of God's people today the gifts that have been given by divine Persons makes it possible for the needs of the saints to be met, and the testimony to the community maintained. There is built into our new nature a desire for the welfare of God's people. It gives us joy when we see them strong in faith and acting in grace toward each other. Interaction in the Christian life with other believers has the effect of giving us joy at the moment. As each day progresses, that same mutual faith is a safeguard for us when the temptations arise. We know the actions and decisions I make will affect my brothers and sisters either in a positive or a negative way. In times of temptation that mutual faith serves to help us maintain purity of life because of who I am linked with by the faith of us both.

Our public testimony in the Gospel is challenged and promoted by this mutual faith we share. Those who pray, want to know how their prayers are answered. Those who labor, want to know if there are those who pray. The checks and balances of mutual faith are truly a significant part of our Christian testimony.

It is not uncommon to hear one say, "How is it going?"
Or maybe to hear back in reply, "What are you doing?"
These are not words of interference,
Rather the sharing of common experience,
As we share mutual faith in each daily occurrence
In this life of faith, we are living.

Sometimes we ask, "How do you feel?"
Another might say, "Have you begun to heal?"
It is only right to express our compassion,
There is no desire to elicit a confession,

There is a way to give thoughts and expression
So they know our interest is real.

One might ask another, "Where are you reading?"
The other might answer, "This truth I am heeding!"
To share thoughts of God's Word is right,
Often, we pass on to another some light,
That helps them keep strong in the fight -
And we are thankful for them interceding.

So, one might say, "Your gift you are faithfully using.
And the reply comes, "I sincerely thank you for choosing
To give me help in this way,
It keeps me from going astray,
That is just what I needed today,
That my testimony of faith in Christ I won't be losing."

"I thank Thee, O God my Father, for Thy people who care for and strengthen each other in the faith. May I always be ready to listen to them when they speak to correct me. And may I always be ready to help them when I should. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:13

SOME FRUIT

The apostle Paul had learned the value of fruit-bearing. Perhaps someone had told him of the teaching the Lord gave on that subject that we can read in John 15. Our area of service is among people. We serve God when serving people. Paul knew he would be able to sow some seed of the Word of God among those believers at Rome that would strengthen them in the faith. For some reason he was not able to go there personally, but the Spirit of God used that hindrance to produce this remarkable treatise on the Gospel. From that hindrance has come widespread blessing through many generations.

We may not always be able to accomplish what we had hoped. However, God is able to produce a harvest among His people that may not be recognized at the moment, but will produce lasting fruit as a result of the effort we put forth to use the gift God has given. Spiritual growth takes time to become evident. The benefits to the brothers and sisters in Christ will be seen in new converts as well as those who have experienced many of the blessings of the Christian life already. The assembly at Rome was probably composed of mostly Gentile believers. Others were bringing fruit as a result of Paul's ministry and no doubt the Gentiles at Rome would do the same.

During the course of our service for God, we may not only minister to those we know and are associated with, but may reach way beyond us to others we don't even know. It is incumbent on us to keep motivated to use what God has given to us. We have the privilege to produce fruit for God's glory in the lives of others.

"Where did you learn that?" we may ask someone.
"From a man who taught us when to our assembly he had come
To minister to us, that in the faith we may grow -
And he passed on to us what to him someone showed
Was the truth of God to be practiced today;
And he told us that this he had heard another say.
His teaching was timely and suitable for our need.
So, to what he taught us we have given good heed."

As I heard that person pass on this information,
I was reminded of a time in a certain situation,
It was necessary to pass on truth to that very man,
So he could tell other brothers and sisters in the best way he can
Things that were taught him, though I didn't know at the time
That he had understood the value of the light that would shine
To many other people wherever he would go
And through passing on those truths, others would grow.

To me it was an encouragement to not hesitate
To teach God's truth knowing that it can make
An impact on people in many other places
That can bring spiritual blessings and maybe put a smile on faces
Of those who were wondering what they should do,

And what the consequences of their choices would be when they were through.
So, it moves me to continue to God's Word to be faithful,
Knowing that through the teaching help others to be fruitful.

"Father God, who knows the blessings Thy Word can bring to those in difficult times, would it please Thee to add a special power and blessing to those who declare Thy Word in many places this day. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:14

I AM A DEBTOR

There are real obligations we owe to others. It's part of what goes along with being in the family of God and a member of the kingdom of God. Actually, we are stewards of God's grace and the message of salvation. God has entrusted us with the most important task anyone could ever have. We are to tell people how to come to God by faith. Paul was to take the Gospel to kings and to the Gentiles. His obligation was to reach the cultured and the uncultured. That covered pretty much all of the Roman empire as far as the extent as to where he was to go. The wise and unwise refers to all degrees of intelligence. The people he was to reach with the Gospel were all people in every place.

To be the trusted bearer of tidings of infinite importance is a high calling indeed. The steward of God's truth is not upset in any way because he is a debtor to all men. He knows the great privilege it is to open the eyes of people to the light of the Gospel. Such a person is glad to be a debtor who tells people to "Come, for all things are now ready." He is willing to become "all things to all men that by any means he might save some." Paul was a debtor because God had committed the Gospel to him.

The Gospel message that has been given to us to tell others of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, is a great privilege to be involved in. We owe people to tell them of the wonders of God's grace, His love and forgiveness. It is our obligation to pass on the simplicity of salvation because of the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross. They need to hear from us the truth of the resurrection, ascension and coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. People need to know of the unsearchable riches of Christ. We are debtors with the great privilege of being a steward of our Lord to tell the world, "All things are ready, come."

What really do I owe to those of my generation?
How can a debtor to all men tell them all the way of salvation?
It seems to me an impossible task, so how should I make a start?
In some way I have to convince my hearers I speak to them from my heart.

I am a debtor to the family and friends I know best.
They need to be reminded of God's truth just like the rest.
Some have heard the Gospel for a lifetime, yet until now they have neglected
What they knew from their youth, the same as those who Christ rejected.

I am a debtor to the children and the poor, to the simple and to the rich.
To the Lord God individuals are worth more than the world, it doesn't matter which.
The delight when a child is saved is as great as when one is more mature.
My obligation to them both is to make the way of salvation more clear.

I am a debtor to those I have never met to give them God's Good News.
The ones the Lord directs me to are the ones who in grace He did choose
To hear the Gospel whether in this town or some other place.
It is only possible for me to find them if I am willing to walk by faith.

I am a debtor to the Lord's own people to teach, encourage and cheer.
Not everyone I am to seek is far away, some folks are very near.
I owe them the time they need to be strengthened for daily living;
When it is within my power some help for them to be giving.

I am a debtor to the Lord Jesus, that is a debt I cannot pay.
A thousand years of labor and service can't pay for a moment of His suffering that day.
When on the cross, He bore my sins I could not erase for eternity -
But because of what He did for me, my sins are cast into the deepest sea.

"Father God, I will never be able to fill all these obligations, but it does givenmy life real meaning when I am able to apply myself to the work of the kingdom of God. When it comes to the needs of the saints and sinners, I know there will always be those who are needy. But I know when I do what needs to be done for the Lord, there

is a lasting value in that effort. Thank You for letting me participate in Thy work. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:15

I AM READY

There is an enthusiastic note to the words of the apostle Paul as he thinks of Rome. Rome was the center of the political world at that time. The emperor was there. It was the center of the Gentile world. The carnal activities of an ungodly generation were there. It had men of learning, culture and influence living and teaching there. Victory parades of soldiers and their captives marched into Rome and through its streets. It was the center of all kinds of sinful activity. What a place for the soul winner to be! In the very center of Paul's being he was ready to preach Good News in Rome.

Rome as a city and culture despised the Jews, but he was ready. He perhaps was a small man, and to outward appearance weak, but he was ready. He had a thorn in the flesh, but he was ready. He wasn't interested in going up the Apian Way in a victory parade. He was willing to march alone with Christ to the center of the Gentile world and preach the Gospel. What a spirit! What a man of faith in his Lord! He did finally get there - as a prisoner. He did preach there in his own hired house. He did see the results of the Gospel even in Caesar's household. God had His way and time for Christ to be preached through this willing servant. He was ready!

The example given to us by this faithful servant is that we too may be ready to preach the Gospel where our Lord leads us. It is the path for every faithful servant to follow - the path of faith. The Lord Jesus Himself walked that path. Paul walked that path. Faithful stewards of the Gospel have walked that path down through the past centuries. Now it is our time to walk the path of faith and be ready to preach the Gospel. Paul was eager to give that work his very best and so should we. The place and time of His leading depends on Him to open the door of opportunity. It may be in an entirely different way than what we expected that our Lord will send us into a place to bring the Good News. It is up to us to be ready.

These were not just the empty words of someone seeking a new adventure.
Nor were they the plaintive whines of someone wanting to gain attention.
The man who is ready to be used by God is like a soldier awaiting orders.
When we hear the Great Commander's voice that is the time to go forward.

To be ready means we don't have a tight grasp on material things.
To be ready means I am willing to go not fearing what this venture brings.
To be ready means I trust the One who deals with authority.
To be ready means I am waiting for the Lord of the harvest to call on me.

When one is ready that person knows it is Christ who him will use.
For such a one "to live is Christ," He is the One with the right to choose
Just where and when to send one who lives in a state of readiness.
God can use that one to reveal Himself through, and through him others bless.

Readiness implies one knows what may be expected from him in labor.
It also indicates that he is ready to apply himself with fervor
To the task whatever it may be by the One who sends him forth.
He knows it is God who works through men to reach what is of great worth.

When there is the unmistakable call to rise and go forth to serve -
It is important we know the goal and from the path of faith not swerve.
To present the Gospel message is the work of the faithful one.
The results of his or her service is not our goal, ours is to honor the Son.

We honor Him when we're ready to act on His guidance alone.
We honor Him when we keep at the work until that work is done.
We honor Him by being faithful in things both small and large.
We honor Him by being true to the message He to us does charge.

"Heavenly Father, I know that everything before us this day is already known by Thee. In the little and big things of this day, I pray Thee to help me to faithfully carry them out. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:16

FOUR "FORS"

Paul was not ashamed to go that city of licentious living, idolatry and human political power with the message of the Gospel. The capital of the Roman empire is much less in importance than the Gospel of Christ. The Nazarene who was despised by His own people who would not receive Him, had an impact already in that great city. A carpenter from Galilee would seem to have been an insignificant Person but "the powers that be" in Rome were already affected by Him who they had put to death. They had seen and heard of many crucified people but there was something different about Jesus. It was the Gospel - the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ that changed everything. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel" gives us an understanding of the impact of the Good News on Paul.

We do not have to be embarrassed when we declare the words of truth of a risen Savior to a dying world. The fact is that the message of the Gospel gives us a positive and glorious hope to pass on to a sinful and hopeless generation of people. Fear of reprisal makes us ashamed or embarrassed. The mocking words of scornful people may embarrass us. A lack of knowledge of the message so we fear to answer the questions people ask makes some ashamed. Confidence in God and the testimony of our own faith in Christ and its effect on us personally, will keep us from being ashamed of the Gospel.

The second "for" gives the reason for boldness. The death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is "the power of God unto salvation." It is the message of the Gospel itself, not the way it is delivered that is the power of God. "The word of the cross" is the power of the cross, not the cross itself, because the cross was only an object. People have and do form crosses that are only symbols of a death. The Gospel does not stop with the death of Christ. Its message includes the burial and resurrection "according to the scriptures."

Every person that presents the Gospel must know in their own soul the truth of the message they preach and teach. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. This is not a casual assent to a historical event. This means one who preaches, heralds or publishes the Gospel knows personally the power of God in their own life that has brought them salvation.

One who proclaims the Gospel must know "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It is not our business to argue the message or to present the Gospel as a new philosophy. The person who is making a proclamation of the Gospel is passing on definite statements about the Lord Jesus Christ and His death burial and resurrection. He is proclaiming the revelation of a Person. Salvation is the result of his message, "For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also the Greek."

The Jews had the law, the temple and forms of worship. They had what should have been to them a great advantage because of all the Word of God that had been given to them. The Gospel message originated in Jerusalem. The Gospel was first preached there. The offer of salvation was first given there. It is just a statement of fact that it began with the Jews, not that they were greater in importance. "There is no difference, for all have sinned."

Don't be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,
There is power there that is greater than men.
The message of the Gospel is a truth to be prized,
Which we have been given to tell unto them.
There is no need to be embarrassed about telling the truth,
Especially when it is the truth of God.
The Gospel of Christ is of inestimable worth,
Telling the Good News of Christ Jesus, the Lord.

Don't be ashamed of the Gospel, for it has real power
To turn people from darkness to light.
We can tell the same Gospel message over and over
And it changes those who believe from wrong to right.
They may not at first seem to pay much attention
Because they probably have a lot on their mind.
But there is the power of God that leads to salvation,
When the lost believe, the Savior they find.

Don't be ashamed to declare your allegiance
To the power of God in the Gospel.
Some may hear only a word or a sentence
And others may seem to be hostile.
But God's Word doesn't return void, there is a reason
For us to this Gospel proclaim.
There is a sowing time and harvest has a season

When God's Gospel brings forth fruit in its time.

Don't be ashamed of the Gospel message you preach
There are people God intends to save.
To some at first it may seem what we teach
Is nothing different than what they have.
And then when they listen and compare what you say
With what is written down in the Word of God.
They will then consider they have been led astray
And will come to receive Jesus as Lord.

"O God of the Gospel, the word of the Good News has borne some fruit in salvation and for this we give Thee ALL THE GLORY and our grateful thanks. May the words of salvation being preached presently in different places be sown in faith, watered with grace, and reaped in hope. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

JEW FIRST

Good News is the focus, it is not about you,
For God had through ages a plan;
That would bring back again those He loves to Himself,
And a method to save fallen man.

But why to the Jews, what is special about them?
Why did the Gospel to them first be preached?
These ones that God chose had no special claim;
But through them lost nations He would reach.

God wanted to show us His mercy and love,
So, He picked out a nation so small,
That they could never say what greatness they have,
It was their weakness that was most important of all.

To them and through them, God had purposed to show,
To the world His plan of salvation.
In spite of the trials and grief the Jews go,
He sent the Messiah through this nation.

For centuries they learned by His precepts and laws,
What is needed to have fellowship with God.
Even though they failed often and in sin they did fall,
Christ did come through the Jews as The Word.

The moral restraints from the commandments God gave,
Would have saved them from most of their trouble,
But even though blessed as the people God loved,
They fell, and their woes seemed to double.

Now, God again, though the Messiah who came,
Would bring blessing through Jews to the world.
When the Gospel is preached clearly, and Jesus is named;
Those who receive Him are cleansed by His blood.

Some Jews believed, but many refused
To accept Jesus as the Messiah to come.
They heard the word first, and were able to choose,
For Christ made that nation His home.

It is our turn now who are called "Church of God,"
To declare to the world the Gospel.
We must not fail this charge we have received from the Lord;
Even though to us now, most are hostile.

Let it never be said, we are ashamed to be counted,
As those whom God has trusted with truth.
Do not stop now, though the truth may be flaunted
For God is still saving souls through faith.

“O God and Father, the Sovereign Ruler over all nations: the nation Thou didst choose so long ago is in trouble. They are troubled from within as well as without. We pray with anticipation for the day to come when they turn to their God and finally find peace after so many centuries of trouble. We know this will be when they accept the Prince of Peace, their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

ROMANS 1:17

FOUR "FORS" continued

The righteousness of God could have a frightening impact if in His own righteousness, He had struck down every unrighteous one in the human race. He could have justly brought judgment down and doomed us all and it would have been an act of divine holiness. Instead He has chosen to act in righteousness. His holy claims against us have been righteously satisfied when those claims were laid on the Sinless Substitute, His own Son.

God's righteousness on the principle of faith placed in Christ alone has been openly revealed to mankind through the Gospel. The third of the "fors" is that we don't have to be ashamed of the Gospel because God has provided a legal, just way to accept us and not compromise His own righteousness. Apart from any human effort or merit, the atoning work of Christ has satisfied God on account of our sins. Now the act of faith in Christ has been made plain to us through God's Word and we reply upon Christ alone based upon faith in His Word alone, which we know without question to be true. Our faith is not an unfounded faith.

The Good News is that God has acted on our behalf when Christ died for our sins, when He was buried, when He was raised again the third day according to the scriptures, and when He was seen by many. The result is plain and obvious to all, "The just shall live by faith." We rest in Christ alone and His accomplished work of salvation for us personally. The Gospel has brought the principle of living by faith that was prophesied, to light by the living believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. "For the righteousness of God is revealed" - through those who live by faith.

There are doubtless things that my faith can't show -
And the full extent of faith's power I may never know -
But for this one day may my light so shine -
That others may come to know the blessings in my faith I find.

I know my "Redeemer liveth" and now is at God's right hand.
I know He is with me even when called to make a stand
Against sin and for God, no matter what others do -
And will give me the power to Him to be true.

I know that He said He will supply all my need.
I know when I pray, to those petitions He gives heed.
When there is a real need, from His great supply,
He provides just what I need, in faith I on Him rely.

I know He has promised to add blessing to His Word
Whether in private or when by others heard.
I know sometimes it is sown as seed in a field.
I know at the harvest it will give forth its yield.

I know God will not leave me nor will He forsake
Me when the temptations and trials of life inroads seek to make
On my life of faith that I might in some way fail the Lord
I know He can strengthen by bringing to remembrance His Word.

I know when through the valley of the shadow of death I go -
He will be with me whether that journey be fast or slow.
I know He is able to provide for me the needed grace.
I know right to the end of life He will help me to live by faith.

"Father, may each activity of this day I am involved in, there may be some way bear the imprint of faith upon it to bring praise and honor to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:18

THE WRATH OF GOD

The last of the "Four 'Fors'" is God's holy, just wrath against all that is contrary and opposes His nature and His will. This is not a look down through the years to a future day of judgment, but a present handing over of rebellious people to go further in their rebellion against God. These are lost people who "the Son of Man who came to seek and to save." These are people who are condemned by their own sin of choosing darkness over light; ideas over evidence; imaginations over evidence; idols over God and religion over salvation.

God's wrath is not irrational bursts of anger. It is not a petulant reaction to the sins people commit that are common to human beings. This is the on-going working of His righteous wrath that is being carried out in the world today. It is being revealed as a judicial handing over of those who turn away from Him and His revealed will to the consequences of their actions. He lets people go their own way and do their own thing. He abandons the wicked to their sins and results of their own sins.

Ungodliness is a direct disregard of God. To the Jews this would be clarified to them in the first commandment. To the Greeks it would go against the inborn nature of man that knows there is One higher than mere men. The unrighteousness of men is a reference to the wickedness of conduct in life. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." But those to whom the wrath of God is revealed go even further. They suppress the truth. They seek to restrain it and hold it down. They know what the truth produces when it is at liberty to be presented. It exposes evil. It makes guilt for sin prick the conscience. It does not allow sin to go on unchallenged. In order to live an unrighteous life, truth has to be defeated. The power of the Gospel is that it exposes sin right away. Then it presents the remedy for sin. God Himself, with universal authority, reveals His wrath today against wickedness.

To many it seems unlike the God they profess to know -
Is unfair to release His wrath against wickedness and sin.
They have a sentimental side they seek to show -
Whenever they get around to talking about Him.
But when it comes to the wicked practices of life -
They seldom show any restraint.
As long as they can turn off and keep out the light -
They continue sinning and make no complaint.

Then comes the consequences of sin they cannot avoid -
And on God they seek to lay the blame.
Their life-style and choices makes null and void -
The claims they make in God's holy name.
Prayers of demand they make in God's face -
Insisting He listens to them.
Their rejection of truth and the Gospel of grace -
Means they must pay the wages of sin.

The disrespect they had for God still has a hold -
On rebellious and arrogant people.
No matter how many times they have been told -
They still consider God their equal.
The unrighteousness of life they continue to pursue
Will bring a payday some day.
When the life of self-centeredness is through -
Their mouths are shut with nothing to say.

Truth to God is precious, we are told it to buy -
And never put it up for sale.
It is revealed in its clearness, we easily know why,
And what its message entails.
It is personified in a Person; Jesus is the Truth -
The statements correspond with the facts.
Above all of men's thoughts truth is of greatest worth.
By the truth of His Word is how God acts.

"Father in heaven, may this day be characterized by the teaching and practice of Thy truth. May the Gospel be spoken in such a way as to bring blessing to those who hear it. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:19

GOD MADE IT PLAIN

What was known of God began with Adam and down through years and generations of people, the knowledge of God was imparted to everyone with open eyes and open minds. The creatorial power of God was never hard to discern. The orderliness and supreme intelligence of God is there for all to see. The holiness and judgment of God cleansed the world by the flood. God's justice, mercy and grace are not characteristics of God that are hidden from man. More important in one way, is that God knows everything about us - every one of us. God's indictment has no distinction. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It reaches all.

God is not hiding from us to try and catch us in some sinning situation. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Men say, "I am not so bad." "There are a lot of people who are worse than I am." "I am not perfect, but basically I am a good person." This can be very deceptive if we really believe this about ourselves. It is wisdom when we listen to the worst God has to say about us. Even though we are born to a race of people lost in sin, God loves us. What is known about God is made plain to us so that we make no mistake about God's omniscience. No one has the excuse to say there is no God. There is way too much evidence that He is, and is a "rewarder of them that fear Him." However, there are those who still say, "There is no God for me."

God's redemption and forgiveness by grace is known to us so we can have hope and life in Christ.

Everywhere I look I can see evidences of Him.
What a glorious place this was before it was marred by human sin.
The problem doesn't start with our actions but the will of man within.
God reveals His creative power to us.

Colors and forms from atoms to stars -
Reveal much of God and His infinite powers
And supreme intelligence that's infinitely superior to the greatest of ours.
God reveals His intelligence to us.

The beauty of a landscape and the beauty of a child -
Draws from those who look upon them an automatic smile.
All the variety of beauty manifest from a face to a flower -
God reveals His glories to us.

There is the sound of a new-born baby's cry.
We often give ourselves or hear another's contented sigh.
A senior's voice sings, "In the sweet bye and bye."
God reveals His love to us.

A baby was born long ago in Bethlehem.
As a youth, Jesus was teaching some learned men
The God-Man walked here among us way back then.
God revealed His grace to us.

Jesus was nailed to Calvary's tree.
He suffered there that day in great agony.
He died on the cross that we might live eternally.
God revealed His salvation to us.

In His Word God unfolded His unchanging truth.
It tells of the Savior's sacrifice and its matchless worth.
And how when I learn of and follow Him, I can bear fruit.
God reveals Himself to us.

"O Holy Gracious God, I bow my heart before Thee today considering the ways You are manifest to me. In Thy grace Thou hast revealed who You are, who Christ is and what He has done, and by Thy Spirit; You revealed to me what I am. I am not left in the dark about Thee and Thy manifest blessings. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:20

POWER AND DIVINITY

Wherever we look there is unmistakable evidence of the work of divinity. God's deity, the state of being God, is known by those who know Him personally - His saints. His divinity, that which pertains to God, is there for everyone to see in His creation. A person alone out on a great desert lifts his eyes to consider the stars and he can find his way home. The seaman in the middle of the vast oceans of earth can tell the direction to

travel by scanning the stars, the sun and the moon. Then he considers the winds and the tides and can find his way around the world. The new mother marveling at the miracle of new life conceived in her is made aware of the power and reality of God. The farmer sows seed in prepared ground. Then he waits for the sun and rain to do their work expecting thousands of times more seeds to be produced than what he planted. In faith he plants and waits for the power and divinity of God to work the miracle of life.

No matter where one may be found in the world; no matter what culture or religion; there is clear evidence of the power and divinity of God that is easily seen. From the day of creation on, man has been without excuse to believe in God. God gave them the light of creation. From that light visible to the human eye and mind, unfolds the truth of Divine Persons of intelligence, order and power. In man's very nature there is a response prompted to act in faith or deliberate rejection. To every person there is a positive response of faith that can be rejected by the human will and will bring damnation if one does so, because they are without excuse.

There is no excuse when we stop to think
We live every single day upon the brink
Of life and death, preserved only by grace
That enables us to easily move from place to place
And see by the evidence that does us surround
With beauty to the eye, and ears hear by thunder sound
There is a God with whom we have to do
Who expects the response of faith from me and you.

There is no excuse when I lift my eyes
And see divine order before me in the skies.
I experience the seasons following year by year
And realize they are necessary for humans to hear.
I look through a scope and see order in the smallest things.
And watch the fruit develop and know that it not only brings
Blessing to me from the ground beneath my feet -
But also, a testimony of a Divine Person I must meet.

There is no excuse as I look within me and see
God has planted a spirit and awareness of eternity.
I cannot escape this divinely implanted fact -
That there is a God who knows me and how I think and act.
There is no escaping Him, for in Him I live and breathe
Life has no real meaning without Him, Him I want to please
Because the body, soul and spirit have no basic use
If I live and die based only on what I choose.

There is no excuse, His power and divinity make very clear
There is a God who creates and rules, and the reason I am here
Is in whatever way possible in the course of this life
I am be to this dark world a little bit of light
So other people may see their way to God,
And perhaps I can help them with some deed or word -
To put their personal faith in Him and be willing to use
The efforts of their lives, helping those who are without excuse.

“Father in heaven, I am thinking there must be those around who have the light of creation making them aware of the reality of Thee. If I am to speak to them lead me to them and give me words of truth to say that they may be saved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

WITHOUT EXCUSE.

Why is that sun up there in the sky?
Why are there so many kinds of birds that fly?
Why is the snow that falls so white?
How can I know what is wrong or right?

God made His creative work so plain -
That a man's imagination - often so vain -
Would be directed to consider Him
Who identifies and makes plain what is sin.

So, I, a man who is prone to wrong,
Would not think I on earth am so strong -

That I can live my life without faith -
When I owe everything to God's redeeming grace.

May I be simple enough to look around
From the sky above right down to the ground
And see the proofs in creation - and then understand -
That God knows all about me, even though I am just a man.

“Father, may I never cease to wonder at all the evidences I see in creation of Thy power, sense of beauty and order. I marvel at the ways Thou art revealed to people, so that no one in whatever place they are, will ever be able to say I saw no evidence of a real personal God. I am totally convinced by what I see that in Thy own Person, there is incomparable power, glory, wisdom and beauty. Amen.”

ROMANS 1:21

GLORIFIED HIM NOT

There is something wired up in us as human beings that makes us aware of God. The knowledge of the existence of God does not mean that we are accepted by Him. We ought to worship and give glory to Him but men refuse to express gratitude and thanksgiving to Him. Instead of being thankful for life itself and all the blessings that accompany it, people have become thankless and godless. The conscience and its condemnation would not go away so men became idolaters to escape their thoughts of responsibility to God.

In the desire to avoid accountability to God, people begin to follow futile and vain speculations about God. They dream up their own ideas, and what they would consider "reasoning" is simply a product of their own imagination. These Gentiles could see and know about God through creation but instead of giving Him thanks, their imagination led them to form idols based on the sun, moon, stars or strong animals God created. This leads to worshipping the creature instead of the Creator.

The result is the heart, the seat of knowledge and emotion, lost the little light it had when they could see evidence of God. Instead of becoming wiser, they wandered foolishly through the darkness of their own thoughts. Created beings refused to recognize the One who created them. Daily they experienced God's provision but never stopped to consider where it came from and to give God thanks for it. This was the way it was with people in the past and it is getting worse now than ever before. Now, instead of accepting the truth of God, and Christ as their Savior, they have made men themselves to be their gods. In their effort to exalt man to the place of human-made deity, they also seek to bring the True God down to being simply a form of humanity.

How strange it is when mankind seeks to make himself to be a god.
How offensive it must be to the Almighty God who only is the Lord.
How gracious and loving is God toward us to allow us to even exist.
He has not come down yet in final judgment nor said, "Cease and desist."

Farther and farther men seem to be going in order to avoid the truth.
And yet God in grace, still extends His welcome and offers to man new birth.
But instead men make their own definitions of words that have their source in God.
Not only do they go astray themselves but seek to alter God's very word.

Through all around us there is unmistakable evidence of God's reality.
From the atoms so small or the universe so large, thinking people can easily see
There is a God who is the Creator but men seek to deny the fact
That we are accountable to God as a Person who knows how we think and act.

An uncontrolled imagination has the power to make a wise man a fool.
Our intelligence isn't the controlling factor of life, it is only a tool
Implanted by God to be used by men that we might have fellowship with Him.
When imagination takes over the mind, it leads people into all kinds of new sin.

It begins with a thought, perhaps a passing fancy that appeals to sinful flesh.
Then it develops almost a mind of its own until one is caught in its mesh.
From there it takes over until it controls the body, the spirit and the soul.
And what was only a foolish and childish imagination now has taken over control.

God is not glorified nor are people thankful, they think they are on their own.
The imagination leads to deeper and darker sins as men start to reap what they've sown.
There are no thanks, only increasing greed as men seek to raise themselves high.
They think they are the center of their own universe until it comes time to die.

They don't like to think of that at all because there is an inborn fear
That when they die there might be more than all they have experienced here.
Some say they believe in incarnation, others - "When you're dead, you're dead."
But ingrained in the human psychic is a fear of what lies ahead.

"O Righteous God, there are so many people who have been led astray by their vain imaginations and those evil suggestions of others. May there be a way I can reach some with the truth of Thy great salvation, even though I am getting older. If there are those You will use me to connect with, I pray Thee to give me the right words and wisdom to present the message of salvation to them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

BAD CHOICE.

The downward spiral begins with rejecting God. Then comes the exaltation of our own ideas. Then the rejection of a values system which leads into sexual sin, greed, malice and all other forms of perversion of that which is right. Once choices like these are made, it is Christ only who can give them a way of escape. It is beyond man's ability to reverse the result of bad choices. Sins that are in the vortex of that awful whirlpool of degradation are:

No knowledge - sin against light: The light of morality has been wired to each person. There is in every rational person a sense of right and wrong. Because of that inherent part of our personality, all of us has an awareness of One who is larger, higher, far exceeding us in intelligence and character. There is a general knowledge of God so that we are acquainted with His existence and character. But those philosophies of men arose that shut up the glories of God seen in creation, conscience, and goodness. The lives of true believers, pain on the bed and the chosen symbols of Christ's person and death, also speak to us without words. In exchange for the knowledge of God, they gave people an image.

No respect - did not glorify God: Some of the more famous philosophers looked within themselves to find God. Plato, Socrates, Lucretius and others like them were in the vanguard of existentialism that afflicts many people in our day. In the vanity of their reasoning, and stupidity and nonsense when speaking about God, they reject the God revealed to us in the scriptures of truth. They sought for Him in the darkness of their own hearts and because they did not find Him there, they didn't bother to look elsewhere.

No honor - unthankful: God was not in their thoughts. The lack of respect and reverence for God was the source of their abominations. To glorify God is to reverence Him, and every thing about Him. To glorify God is to venerate His name. To take things for granted as our right, is to dishonor God.

No gratitude - self-conceited: There is a hardness and an insensitivity to God and even to others when the darkness of rejected light, an unthankful heart, a high-minded arrogance, claim the mind of a person. Vain imaginations arise as a result of man at the center of his life and world.

No understanding - foolish heart darkened: These people are condemned because they choose darkness over light; ideas over evidence; imagination over evidence; idols over God; religion over salvation. When people see themselves as the center of their own little universe, they soon invent gods of their own. Then these gods become something they can't do without, and they form idols to look to.

"O God of righteousness: how it must grieve Thee to see such potential lost because of a series of bad choices. What could have been so honorable and glorifying to Thee, is gone to worse than worthlessness. A thing that is worthless goes on to a scrap-heap, but these influence others. I have run into this often lately in Gospel work. I am finding it more difficult to know how to deal with people who make such awful choices. I am asking Thee for understanding to know when to press on, and when to walk away. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:22

WISE OR FOOLISH?

There are those who think they know more than other people - even more than God. They reject the light of the knowledge of that which is able to be seen by all men and claim they have superior intelligence - they claim to be wise. Those who are truly wise don't make such claims, in fact they are usually humble people, but they have the ability to make sound judgment that is characterized by deep understanding. Such wisdom is not something based on a "spur-of-the-moment" decision, but an enduring knowledge that has been formed over the passing of time.

A fool by contrast, is one who lacks good sense and makes decisions apart from good judgment. They have told others they are wise because they have studied the words of a few writers rather than those of over 40 writers writing over a period of 1500 years whose words correspond with the facts we can see all around. Also, those teachings have been tried and proven over generations by millions of people. More than that, holy men were moved by the Holy Spirit to put the holy scriptures into a Holy Book for us all to read.

There are silly "reasonings" coming from the minds of people who are wanting to avoid ever meeting God and being subject to Him. So, they put foolish words together that blind their own minds and those that follow their baseless teaching.

We must take time to make sure that what we listen to corresponds with the truth of the Word of God. Until man knows what sin is and that he is guilty of sin, he will have no interest in God's grace. If the sense of guilt is not real enough, there will be no felt need of pardon and there won't be true repentance. Without repentance toward God, there will be no faith placed in our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who claim they are wise but avoid telling the truth about our sin, and the righteousness of God, are tools in the hands of the devil. They are not wise at all but have become fools.

To be wise in one's own eyes is dangerously close
To being in a position where you will fall on your nose
And be humbled by others when they prick your balloon
Leaving you looking foolish and very alone.

Making sound judgment does not happen in a moment.
One takes the time to consider all the things that have a bearing on it.
Then after considering what they would think are all "pros and cons" -
Their conclusion will be sound depending on what it is based upon.

To think God is not a Person but just a strange ethereal force,
Makes no sense at all when we stop to think and watch the course
Of stars and seasons, of the winds and seas.
Every one follows a set pattern - there are boundaries to these.

The origin of human beings being a bit of slime in a bog
That was followed over time into becoming something like a frog
That climbed into a tree and grew fur instead of feathers,
And then became a human - is foolishness, unlike the fact that God made us for His
pleasure.

When we stop to think clearly it brings reasonable conclusions and makes common sense -
That God made us in His image, that we could share with Him the joy that is His,
In His creation and glory, all the marvelous works of His hands
That He wants to share with others in love, so He created man.

He made us with a mind to intelligently share in His thoughts.
He gave us a will to do things morally and upright as we ought.
He placed in us emotions to be able to love Him in return.
But man made a bad choice when from God's choice he turned.

In the mind of foolish men, morals are merely old habits.
Self-centered and indulgent people look for something strange and grab it.
Evading the blessings of God, He has provided for us in grace,
Men have become foolish, putting the faith in the wrong place.

"How sad it is Father to me, and how offensive it must be to Thee when we humans turn away from all the evidence of Thyself that is around and follow vain imaginations. I pray Father, that I might be kept from going astray in any way at all from Thee and Thy revealed will. Keep me near the cross and near Thy words of truth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:23

INCORRUPTIBLE GOD

What an unspeakable insult it is to the eternal God for frail mortal men to reject the knowledge of Him. He who has existed forever and has the glory and majesty of an eternal, perfect, self-existing God, has been given the even greater insult of being construed to be like the creatures He made with the power of His word. The Greeks made their deities to be in human form. The Egyptians made Him out to be in the form of

beasts. From a human form to birds, then to four-footed animals, then reptiles - the darkened minds of men denigrated the Person of the Almighty God.

It is hard to imagine such grace that in spite of the terrible arrogance of men, God our Savior will "have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." For people to carve a piece of wood into a form and bow to worship it, or form a calf out of gold and claim it to be their god, is insulting rejection of the evidence of the Living God we can see wherever we look.

When we take time to meditate on God's glory, infinite power and majesty, it makes the idolatry so much more a repulsive insult of epic proportions to the Almighty God. May God give to those who know Him and love Him, the determination and courage to stand up against the incredible foolishness of those who seek to teach that God is no more than a corruptible creature of their own imaginations.

What would ever make reasonable man fall for unreasonable opinions.
How could people ever think the creation reflects a four-footed beast or a bird with
pinions.
The perversions that come from a darkened mind seem to know no bounds.
When all it takes to see some light of truth is to stop and look around.

Mans' mind is such that self-exaltation seems to be foremost in his thinking
To make himself or those like him to be god, reveals the depth to which he is sinking.
The greatest minds of mortal men can design some remarkable inventions,
But cannot in any way produce life or give life unlimited extensions.

To ever think God was like a bird seems hard for me to conceive.
It limits God to our view overhead and instead of heaven, He dwells in trees.
Birds do remarkable and unusual things that cause many of us to marvel,
But to think God is like the birds that fly leads one to think of minds unraveled.

Which of the beasts could reflect best on God to show what God is like?
The horse or the ox, the sheep or the fox all shed a little bit of light
On God the Creator with unlimited intelligence to use creatorial power,
And give life unique to each creature He made, in the same way He created each flower.

To make little images of frogs and snakes, of lizards and crocodiles,
And say they are like God in any way brings a gasp of dismay rather than a smile.
The depravity of man to go to such depths in his desire for self-exaltation -
Makes it easy to see why the creation itself will reveal mans' greater condemnation.

The conceit, the pride, the arrogance and ignorance of men defies expression.
There is no doubt of the wages of sin which is death has led to mans' rejection
Of the knowledge of God and has led men farther into the stygian darkness
Where grace no more reaches the souls of those who refused God's call to hearken.

"Father, the God of all grace and mercy: how kind it is of Thee to let human beings live in spite of the terrible sin of their rejection of Thee. Thy mercy has been great to allow men to survive year after year in darkness and rank unbelief. How great is Thy love! O Gracious God, save souls I pray in this work in which we are presently engaged. Keep them back from the pit and bring them into the light of Thy dear Son. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:24

GOD GAVE THEM UP

Depravity is only a word it is true, but it describes best how far away from the virtue God intended for men to display we have gone as human beings. There is an inward corruption, a demoralization of a society when immorality goes unchecked. It knows no bounds as a whole generation of degenerate people abandon restraints and live shameless lives that lead to hardened people who have no fear of God.

When God-given restraints are ignored, the unclean hearts of men plunge them into the cesspool of bodily uncleanness and vileness. A society that lifts the restraints of God-given laws and defines and interprets the restrictions of moral law according to mans' own will, will soon fall into all forms of sexual sin and claim it to be "natural." There have been and still are, those who say society is in a "developmental stage," and we are progressing in our climb from the bog of our original evolution.

Instead of more happiness and peace, we have in society alarming increases of suicide, murder and war all over this world. Some of the forms of entertainment exalt immorality and mock those who believe in purity,

integrity and virtue. The lusts of the hearts of men goes far beyond the practice of homosexuality or other sexual sins. Flesh has desires that may be yielded to or not. The lusts of the heart is in the human being even after the body has decayed and turned to dust. Lust springs from within the soul and will never cease in the lost soul. It will never be satisfied nor can it be controlled in the unregenerate person. The conscious condition of the damned will never be able to overcome the lusts of the heart. Those lusts will never cease to exist. When God gives people over to their own desires for impurity and the degrading of one's own body, that condition does not change. Man makes his choice and must exist with the consequences of his choices.

"Is there no relief from this insatiable desire," the lustful sinner cries.
He opened his mind, his heart and his body to those latent desires that lie
Just beneath the surface of an unregenerate mind, just waiting for release.
When that person chooses uncleanness, from then on, he finds no peace.

Each lustful thought forms an image defined, but only a fantasy.
From then on, the gate of restraint is opened to pollute everything he sees.
There is no rest to the wicked, like a troubled sea he tosses -
And through life and to its very end he has nothing to show but losses.

The laws of the nation can say what they will, but God's laws will surely stand.
They have only increased the downward speed sin is taking in this favored land.
What was once our strength has become a weakness, we have become an immoral nation.
The laws that preserved us have changed, hastening our national condemnation.

When the foundations are destroyed, "what shall the righteous do," is not just a plaintive
wish.
There are choices to make that are very unpopular when we refuse to go along with this.
Those who live by faith will have to stand out, even our silence defines our position.
We will not succumb to the pressure or compromise; we must maintain our righteous
vision.

The testing times will come when people say, "Everyone does it," what are we to do.
The laws we live by are indelibly imprinted on our hearts and to them we maintain true.
In spite of the majority, by God's grace we will stand, for what we know is just and right.
We may not be many but with divine strength imparted we will continue to shed some
light.

The person who stands with God alone will often be an object of reproach.
But better to be persecuted for righteousness' sake, then live a life that does not count.
So no matter what the crowd around may do, with God we will take our stand.
And people around will know, a few still have love for this favored land.

"Holy, Righteous, Almighty God, I ask that we who are saved will continue to maintain a standard of righteousness that is not compromised by the changing laws of our courts. By Thy great strength, use our weakness to impress those around that there are still some who believe God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:25

EXCHANGED THE TRUTH

The truth of God involves more than His Word revealed to us in the holy scriptures. It includes truth about God Himself - His glories, His nature, His character, His infinite power and wisdom. There is no form or image that can begin to convey all that God is. If we were ever so skilled with words, we can never describe Him. If all the finest artisans could spend their lifetimes trying to depict Him using all their expertise, they could not begin to show us the truth of God Himself. A photographer could travel the world and find every scene in his lens, and take every awe-inspiring picture he could, and those images of the Creator's work would never define the truth of God.

Contrast the indescribable, eternal God with "the lie" that people have exchanged the truth of God for, and we begin to see how heinous, offensive, horrible and damnable the actions of men are. They have replaced truth with an illusion; what is holy and perfect with falsehood and delusion; what is real and constant with prevarication and fiction. And then on top of that evil they worship and serve this figment of their imagination instead of the One who made the creature. Idolatry is so great a wickedness that it must be done away with. There is "no agreement" of the "temple of God with idols." Idolatry in every form is condemned by God. Anything that claims and keeps my attention on it and away from God is an idol.

Every true child of God, when they think upon the "Great Creator who became my Savior" is moved to express worship in spirit and in truth - usually in humble and sincere words. We realize and express the fact that "all God's fullness dwelleth in Him." The children of light passing through a world of darkness are always ready to express their faith in simple, heart-felt words that clarify his or her devotion to God. Even though they may be living among the devotees of sin - the child of God's faith is reaffirmed with a "Yea" and "Amen."

What depths of darkness can fill the souls of those who choose to sin.
Coming out into the public view is the evil that dwells within.
Mocking words intended to degrade God are spoken in dulcet tones -
And foolish people give ear to those who know as they are known.

Dark thoughts of subtle invention are articulated until they are believed.
In a not too distant future, these are taught as truth and by many received.
In no way do they promote righteous living, not happiness or holiness either.
But people who want no God over them, fall for that moral sickness like a fever.

There is no redeeming feature that results from believing "the lie."
When people choose to listen to falsehood instead of on the truth rely -
There are consequences that follow and they are negative in every way.
No one else can be blamed if we listen to what deceivers say.

"Up with man" has been a cry that has sounded across the land.
"No fear" was a phrase people used when facing their fellow-man.
Those that exalt themselves with pride will by the hand of God come down.
And then it will make no difference by what title they were known.

Some people in either false humility or in strange imagination
Talk to trees and animals as brothers in difficult situations.
When pressure rises in life, they express their frustrations to a beast -
And think that in some way this act will grant to their soul release.

Just when we think we are at the darkest time, there comes a greater darkness still.
And the depravity of the human soul the cup of evil doings fill.
How deep can we humans go in our quest to get away from God -
May never be known in this world of sin until Jesus rules the world.

However, there are those on earth who still hold strong to faith.
They know the blessings and the future of sinners saved by unmerited grace.
So, they bless God when they look around and find reasons to rejoice.
They can see light shining in the darkness since they responded to God's voice.

"O Holy God my Father, the blessings of eternal life are not hidden, even though I live in a sinful, ungodly age. I praise Thee for the evidences of grace I can see in Thy people as they move among the people of the world who follow the broad road. I thank Thee for the saints. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1:26

VILE PASSIONS

When God gives people up to their own burning passion, there is a finality to it. No matter what our government may legislate and consider is in the best interests of the people, God has designed standards of behavior and morality that He knew ahead of time are in our best interests. Uncontrolled passions are shameful and debased. There is no foundation, no excuse for those shameful vile passions to overcome the human mind.

There are normal appetites that are natural to the body. These are not condemned when kept in the guidelines of God's original intention. When one steps outside the parameters of marriage or the boundaries of human society as ordained by God - that leads to adultery and fornication. But these have gone beyond even that to unnatural passions that leave human instinct behind. These women have gone so far that God gave them up. There are those who claim these passionate appetites are natural. When that which is natural and designed by God is overlooked or abandoned by those who seek forbidden fruit, usually there is no real or defined limit that will stop them.

Around us the evidence of changing moral standards have become so common-place that Christian believers will be pressured to accept these changes in spite of what the holy scriptures say. In changing times and when social "more's" change, we still must maintain our commitment to God and His truth. It is

incumbent on us to be faithful to God no matter what people do, even if they are our own kin-folk. For us to accept wrong practices and wrong morals in those we have natural familial ties to, and then to condemn those things in others is at the best inconsistent, and at the worst hypocritical and sinful.

Sadly, there will probably be those we know and love who God will give up because they chose to go their own way and ignore the righteousness of life that God intended. It may well be that those who reject God's moral order for living will not only be given up to uncleanness and given up to vile passions, but also given up to eternal damnation.

What fleeting pleasure of lust and vile passion ever could compete
With all that God Himself has planned that we might be complete.
The temporary unnatural appetites by-pass the moral interests that are normal
Those graceless self-centered actions go against all that we know is moral.

There is disappointment and heart-felt grief that those who in their youth
Seemed satisfied and quite content to learn and practice truth
But when they are pressured by those who never learned of God's redeeming grace
For some unknown reason they turn away and reject a life of faith.

Now what guides them and controls them is these senses, not their soul
And they live life in bits and pieces, never able to become whole
Chasing vile passions to find some meaning they are seeking quick relief
Going down that broad road searching, they do things that bring them grief.

The inward marks and outward scars may not be seen by many
But the consequences of uncontrolled passions are hurts that are felt by many.
Family members can't forget their great hopes and dreams for you
Consequences of vile passions change their perception of the one they knew.

Deeper far than just those of the moment are the consequences yet to come
Age and years will dim that passion and that effect will soon strike home
To have known the truth and the right way to live and from that to willfully turn
Will mean that unfulfilled vile passion will in one's soul forever burn.

Never satisfied, always searching, wanting to try out every new thing
Will into the years that follow, nothing but heartache and sorrow bring
When those you thought you loved so much have left and to another gone
Those vile passions still will make demands when you are alone.

"What a miserable existence such people must have, Holy, Righteous God, and how it must grieve Thee to see those who Thou hast loved, turn so completely away from Thy righteous expectations to dark vile passions. May the truth of the Gospel reach to such people and may they be stopped from going on in that way. May they turn in repentance and faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 1: 27

THE PENALTY

The laws of our land have changed because of people who want a lifestyle of their own choosing. The moral and sexual conditions God designed including the restrictions God placed upon men, have been deliberately rejected. We must remember, and help others to remember, there are consequences to expect from sin. "The wages of sin is death."

People now rely on the health care system or on the support of care-givers to deal with the results of homosexuality. Those who contract AIDS and other STDs think a cure has been found that allows them to do what they want and still not suffer the consequences. Perversions deemed okay by men are still perversions and payday will always come.

The standards of human contact and experiences were established by God for the moral, spiritual and physical welfare of mankind. When these are deviated from, there will be serious negative results, both for the individual who commits the sin and on others who are around that person. Our sin does affect others whether we like to admit it or not. Governments may make a sin legal as far as the leaders of our country is concerned, but it is still sin. The majority of people may agree with a sin being engaged in, but it is still sin. Churches may allow sinful practices now that were not allowed in them in the past but it is still sin. Families may have those in them who practice homosexuality and feel they have to accommodate to the one who practices that sin, but it is still sin.

The day of reckoning in the future will be by God's standards, not those of men, no matter how tolerant they think the Bible-believing Christian should be. We love sinners for the potential that is in them and for the fact that God loves them, but we hate the sins that are practiced.

It is wrong for me to okay what designates a perversion
To accommodate, to those practices people choose, causes great aversion
To those who seek to live godly by the biblical mandates
And refuse to compromise the truth that we might placate
The sins of the flesh some want to engage in for pleasure
We know the outcome will be consequences that measure
The results of that sin by the standards God clearly gave
And those who refuse to repent of that sin will not be saved.

We are right to love the sinner - but not to love their sin
Turning away from righteousness is where many begin
To ignore what is right, for the immoral pleasures they seek
And many who seem to do well in some ways are really morally weak
By presenting them with the truth of God when revealed,
They have opportunity to repent and believe the Gospel that they might be healed
Of those mournful habits that take them on a downward spiral.
We may be able to assist them in overcoming that damning trial.

I must never forget the power of God's written truth
It gives me understanding as to each person's worth.
There is hope for the hopeless when in guilt and confession
They turn to God for deliverance from sin and seek His salvation.
There is grace that is sufficient for every person's need.
There is forgiveness with God when to the Gospel they give heed.
Faith in Christ can change a person into a new creation.
And the Holy Spirit gives the power to live out one's regeneration.

"O Righteous God, I believe Thou art able to save to the uttermost any who will come to Thee as a repentant and lost sinner. I know when they put their faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; Thou art able and willing to save them, I pray this will happen here in these Gospel meetings. In the Savior's precious name. Amen."

ROMANS 1:28-31

DEPRAVITY

When men do not approve of God, God does not approve of them, and turns them over to depravity that comes as a result of a debased mind. When the knowledge of God has been deliberately resisted and ignored, the moral sensitivity that is characteristic of those who love and know God, is gone. The restraints God has placed in people no longer controls their actions, thoughts and decisions.

The vices that come from depraved minds seems to have no boundaries. Depravity when let loose to work its havoc, affects the world and people who are around those who are debased. Plotting with evil intent finds its vent in words and acts of evil that break out in every area of one's life. Without divine control there is no real constraints at all in those who follow that life-style.

Even life in a family loses any sense of purpose and joy. What should have been and could have been like heaven on earth becomes a foretaste of the bitterness of being separated from God and of the darkness of hell itself. A child who is disobedient to parents and cannot be trusted is part of what comes from debased parents. It seems like an act of depravity follows the next until the "cup of iniquity" is full.

For those who live by faith in such a society, there is a defiling effect even though such people would not participate in any way in the depraved activities of such a place. The spirit of a just man named Lot, "was vexed from day to day" by what he saw was going on around him. There must be care taken to keep close to the Lord and His people, in order to remain strong in the faith. The new nature of the believer will make us conscious of the dangers of immoral, depraved living that goes on around us.

The trials of faith-living are not over yet, there are darker times ahead.
Even though depravity is rampant it will be more wide-spread.
Things people watch for entertainment and try to experience for fun,
Will become more common-place before this age is done.

To stand against the pressures of all going on that is so debased,
For every child of God will mean we must be committed to be strong in faith.
The testing times are here to stay, and the evil will increase.
It won't be until the Lord Jesus reigns the depravity will cease.

There are definite steps to take to avoid the influences around.
Any place where licentious living goes on, a believer should not be found.
We cannot leave the world; the Lord has left us here for a reason.
The light and salt of the believers is what gives the world a season.

We represent and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others.
All over this depraved world we have thousands of sisters and brothers,
Who are placed by the Holy Spirit in various and sundry locations,
That there they would shine as lights in the dark of sinful nations.

Even though the times seem hopeless and we wait for the Lord to come,
We need as representatives of God's kingdom to reach out and try to save some.
Surely among all of the lost as depraved as they may be,
God has designs of grace toward them to be with Him for eternity.

"Holy Gracious God, there is no doubt that evil and wickedness abounds. I thank Thee that where sin abounded "grace did much more abound." May the riches of Thy grace be understood by some in this place today. If there are conversations I am to have with people, help me to be ready to speak Thy Word with grace and faithfulness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

ROMANS 1:32

SELF-WILL

In the final verse of chapter one where condemnation is pronounced on the ungodly, where their sin is exposed and warnings are given, there is a unity of those who deliberately choose to continue in their outrageous conduct. Their conduct of evil was not due to ignorance of what God required, but a matter of their own self will. They have inner knowledge of God; of normal, moral righteousness they received from God as an inbuilt part of our humanity. They were warned of what their ways deserved and that divine condemnation would be the result. But in spite of this knowledge they persisted in their practices of evil. The witness of their conscience and of creation did not bring them to a halt nor to repentance. They persisted in rebellion and self-will and promoted their fellowship of evil with other evil-doers like themselves.

Rather than regretting and being ashamed of their sinful ways and deeds of sin, they applauded them and approved of others who did the same. The world of the ungodly is a race of people who are alienated from the life of God. The "wrath of God" is revealed from heaven against them. It may seem like people are getting away with debased, evil, wicked, sinful living, but the judgment of God will still take place. There are governmental actions that God sends now when people resist the truth they have known.

God's wrath revealed from heaven is against all ungodliness and against all unrighteousness of men. God has not overlooked sin but it was judged when Christ suffered for sin on the cross. Now there is no question as to the seriousness of man's sin. The Holy God did not spare His Son when our sin was laid on Him. Now it is for our greatest blessing that God's grace and love to us makes our forgiveness possible. The forms that temporarily covered sin in the past days of ignorance that "God winked at," are finished. Now "God commands all men everywhere to repent." Safety from the consequences of sin is now found only in the saving work of Christ. It is in Christ alone one can be preserved from the wrath of God that is revealed from heaven against self-will.

What would possess a person to do what they know is inherently wrong.
The darkness of deliberate sin controls one and is so incredibly strong,
That those who participate willingly in evil and its despicable acts,
Try to make it attractive to rebel against God and keep themselves from facing facts.

There is no question that self-will controls when allowed to have its way.
Rebellion against God has lasting consequences that will be exposed at judgment day.
When people know what is right because of conscience and the inner man,
There is no doubt they are denying the Lord God in every way they can.

God's righteous decrees are known, it is part of our humanity.
He has placed within our hearts the consciousness of eternity.
There is no escaping the results of deliberate denial and rejection.
The wrath of God is revealed from heaven; for such there is no salvation.

When sinful practices are continued in, and in others it is approved;
There will be a day of recompense when heaven and earth are moved,
To leave each self-willed rebel to stand alone before God,
And there is not one there who will remain standing, all will kneel before the Lord.

The best we can do to help those who still in sin's darkness dwell,
Is to make sure we know the truth of God and them the Gospel tell.
At times all we have at our disposal is our life-style to shed some light,
On those who have up until now chosen to live in moral night.

Occasionally we will have opportunity to speak out in the defense of our faith.
When that time comes to us, we need to speak the truth with love and grace.
And trust the Holy Spirit will take some of those words to use,
So those darkened hearts will be broken, lest their soul they forever loose.

"Holy God, the Father of all who put personal faith in Christ: may there yet be given to Thy servant occasions to speak Thy truth to the lost souls around us. If there is a way, I should present the Gospel tonight in a way I haven't thought of, please bring it to my attention so souls can be saved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 2:1

HYPOCRITICAL JUDGING

There was no question that those who were written about in chapter one, were ungodly sinners whose sins condemned them - and they knew it. In chapter two the people addressed were passing judgment on the others who they felt didn't rise to their level of righteous living. The truth was, they were right. The problem was, as they were looking down on others, they were condemning themselves. They were doing the same things in their hearts - and "man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart."

The principles of righteous judgment they were overlooking. God judges according to truth. His standard is His own holiness. God also passes righteous judgment based not on the deeds of men but on the actual carrying out of a work; not on one's opinion of their work or others' opinions. It is quite easy to be critical of another person while doing nothing. The sins of commission will be judged it is true, but so will the sins of omission.

Another criterion for God's righteous judgment is based on the amount of the light of truth a person has. This light of truth has been given to many favored people. However, "If that light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." Others are limited to the light of creation, of conscience and of the goodness of God. Their judgment will be based on that and how they have responded to that degree of light.

Hypocritical judgment condemns the one who judges because they also have the light of the Word of God, the light of the example of other believers, the light of biblical ordinances and practices. The light of the Gospel and its results seen in the lives of those who have repented of sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ will also condemn hypocritical judgment. Those people have no excuse at all for their unbelief. By condemning others, that hypocritical judgment condemns them.

To look down on others less fortunate than you
Can leave you in a very dangerous case.
For God is the Supreme Judge of all men,
And doesn't allow people to take over that place.
Those who think themselves superior to others,
Because of race, culture, education or religion -
Will find themselves to be judged by God's perfect standard,
Not by their own values or condescending opinions.

One of God's stated principles of righteous judgment,
Is judgment according to His truth.
Another criterion has to do with accumulated guilt;
Still another is judgment according to works.
Also, the judgment of God we learn,
Is without partiality or respect of persons.
God's judgment reaches the secrets of the heart,
And is according to reality, not religious profession.

There is no mistake about this fact,
The shed blood of the Lord is the only way to be redeemed.

Philosophy, and morality are self-deceptions,
Other ideas of divine acceptance are only dreams;
The proud judges of other people are condemned;
Just the same as those who sin by actions.
A "religious roof" does not protect or save one's soul,
Or bring to the Holy God just satisfaction.

"Holy, Righteous God: these great principles of Thy righteous judgment are overlooked by mankind as a whole. In the preaching of the Gospel, I pray Thou wilt guide Thy servant to present the dangers of judging hypocritically. May I never allow my opinions and judgments to be such as would be inconsistent with my own life. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 2:2-4

ACCORDING TO TRUTH

Strangely it is not uncommon for self-righteous people to pass their own judgment, based upon their own selves, on other people. It seems by nature we are blind to our own sins and sinful condition but easily see the condition of others. The Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment and will not overlook what the self-righteous person thinks of himself. It may have been, as some say, the Jews thought they would be exempt from the judgment of God because they were a chosen nation. They thought only Gentiles would be judged by a righteous God according to truth.

It is very important that we all, whether Jews or Gentiles, realize the judgment of God is according to truth, not nationality, culture or religious creed. Any person who thinks they are important and does not face their own sin as a repentant sinner, will find themselves judged by a righteous God, just like all other men. God is a God of truth and therefore must judge according to truth. All the facts, the acts and the motivation behind them are known to God. He who knows the "thoughts and intents" of every heart as well as the deeds, needs no witnesses, or jury, or opinions from men. Those who judge others do not seem to understand that God's goodness to them is to bring them to repentance themselves.

God's goodness preserves us, provides for us and protects us. It withholds disease, danger and even death from us. To despise that goodness endangers one who persists in following their own self-interests. God does not unleash His wrath against sinners immediately because of His goodness and forbearance. To despise the goodness, forbearance and long-suffering of God, places the self-opinionated, ungrateful person under the wrath of God when His forbearance is finished. These things were all granted to us to bring us to repentance that we might turn from being self-centered, judgmental people to humble repentant sinners who gladly accept God's gracious salvation.

The judgments of God are always according to facts.
There will be a righteous reward of both motives and acts.
To look on others in self-righteous judgment means God judges that -
With righteous judgment that is according to truth.

Behind the actions and plans of every human being,
Are motives that are not hidden from God who is all-seeing.
He knows our intentions and all their secret meanings -
And will judge with judgment according to truth.

Man's heart is deceitful and wicked by nature.
We're not qualified to make judgments on our fellow creatures.
But there is coming a time arranged by God in the future -
When He will judge according to truth.

God displays His interest in men by His actions of goodness.
He meets our needs from the bounty of His fullness.
All those provisions He had made for us will each bear witness -
To God's judgments according to truth.

To despise His goodness is one thing, and His forbearance is another.
His longsuffering in spite of willful sin we thought was well-covered,
Will not keep the self-righteous sinner from God's justice either -
Because God's judgment is according to truth.

The kindness of God begins with His "goodness" that shows.
His "forbearance" is exercised even though evil still grows.
And His "longsuffering" still waits as farther away mankind goes -

Until God's judgment is according to truth.

"Holy God, my Gracious Father, it is with great relief I think of Thy grace and forgiveness. May I never act in self-righteous judgment on others, even though there is a tendency to do so. Give me the wisdom and common sense to know when to keep silent and also turn my mind to Thee instead of what others do or don't do, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 2:5

STORING UP GUILT

Every day the goodness of God has been bringing blessings to people. Every meal, every good night's sleep, every day lived in health and peace comes from God. The benefits of daily living all have been received by people who think nothing of them and look down in judgment on those around them who are less fortunate than they are. Earthly gifts are taken for granted and claimed for one's self without any thanks to God. There is no contriteness, no heart broken in thanksgiving for the grace and mercy of God. The people of Sodom ate, drank, bought and sold, planted and built without thought for God or repentance of sin right up to the day judgment fell on them.

The blessings of God through a lifetime that have been taken for granted, accumulates the guilt of the self-righteous sinner. Evil works and their results on the one who commits the evil deeds, plus the effect they have on others, stores up guilt that will be faced in the day of the righteous judgment of God. God has been longsuffering and continues to give His blessings to unthankful people, but each blessing and act of His goodness received without repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, has the accumulated effect of "treasuring up" the righteous wrath of God.

There is present judgment that accumulated sin brings upon people today. There is also the righteous wrath of God that will be revealed against accumulated guilt in the day of judgment in the future when sentence will be pronounced on the guilty.

Stubbornness has a way of demanding its own rights.
It does not back away from opinions that lead to fights.
The Bible says it is as idolatry that usurps the place of God.
Yet people dismiss it as not serious with not much more than a simple nod.

An unrepentant heart is one that is filled with pride.
It may not be seen outwardly, but it festers deep inside.
Sin is overlooked by pride when we try to justify our intention;
That is to have people bow to our "superior knowledge" and give them full attention.

Every act of stubborn will is an action placed in store.
Insisting we are always right stores up even that much more
Wrath against one's self in view of "the day of wrath" to come.
And righteous wrath is meted out because of the willfulness we've done.

To not repent of wrong and not from known sin to turn away,
Will bring down righteous wrath on one in that judgment day.
Some judgment may come ahead of the day of final judgment.
Evil not repented of will end in rejection of the impenitent.

Righteous judgment will be carried out when God all sin reveals.
There will be nothing one can say, no higher court of appeal;
For when the books are opened every mouth will be stopped.
The stubborn will have nothing to say, the impenitent heart brought to naught.

The judgments of God are righteous, everyone will have to agree;
"I am getting the results of my wrong, I have no one to blame but me."
The revelation of God will be a surprising turn of events.
The wrath of righteous justice will be upon the sinner sent.

"Lord God of holiness and justice: I know there are millions, probably most people, who will not respond to Thy grace and will face Thy righteous judgment. Would it please Thee to use Thy Word and Spirit here to bring some to repentance before it is too late. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 2:6-10

ACCORDING TO WORKS

The Judge takes the bench applying yet another principle to His righteous judgment of men. He already knows all the facts about every person who He will judge according to his deeds. The works people do are all written in the books "according to their works." God does not desire a person to be damned but to come to repentance and faith in Christ. The choices in life we make have eternal consequences. Some obey the truth and some choose to reject it.

Well-doing is not the means of salvation but describes those who have eternal life and are obedient to the light God has given them. People of faith have been documented in the scripture as examples to us in well-doing. There have always been those who have chosen to commit themselves to God and want to live for Him and please Him by doing His will. Their response is that of a grateful heart that wants to do good.

There are others who are self-seeking and contentious people who will not obey the truth. They subject themselves to unrighteousness. There are many examples of those in the Bible like Saul, who sacrificed in his own way rather than obey God. "Wrath" is God's settled state of mind towards those who are willful and impenitent. "Indignation" is the out-break of righteous wrath on those who reject God and His grace. Tribulation is the carrying out of God's holy vengeance when the wrath of the Righteous Judge hits the object of God's rejection. People may think the life they have chosen will leave them unscathed and able to do what they desire without interference. "Anguish" will be the real experience of the self-righteous, self-centered person who thought themselves above others and immune to the plan of God for them. They are members of the "I did it my way" group who will find their voice when calling for mercy when it is too late to find it.

In the future there will be glory displayed in those who sought the Lord God and His way. That righteousness will be seen in public honor and peace as the Judge declares His holy satisfaction with those whose works of patient continuance brings glory to Him. The works of the contentious will be bringing to them wrath and indignation from the One who knows the intentions and deeds of every person.

There is no way to avoid the consequences of the works we do in life.
The results of patient, steady living or of a life that's filled with strife,
Will someday be put on display, the fruit we cannot avoid.
Works done in life reveal what is inside, whether for self or for the Lord.

Only those with simple minds would think works will go unjudged.
Works don't earn us a place in heaven or add to what Christ has done.
They are evidence of a grateful heart in those who are saved by grace;
Or proof of an attitude of no repentance in those who have no faith.

A man like Abel will bring to God just what he knows God wants.
Noah's well-doing preserved life on earth when he built the ark to save his house.
Abraham, Job, Cornelius and Paul and many from then to now;
With "patient continuance" testify of God's grace when they to His will did bow.

Others are left to warn us of the results of being contentious men.
Cain and Esau knew better but chose to be self-centered to the bitter end.
Pharaoh and Saul, scribes and Pharisees refused God's word to obey.
Indignation and the wrath of God is upon them to this very day.

And the future is dark when we consider the fact that hell is just the beginning;
For the future is dark and eternally bleak for those who insisted on sinning,
Thinking it was no one's business but their own when they chose their own satisfaction;
Unwilling to accept the knowledge of God that He knows every deed and action.

There is no escaping the final decision of the Righteous Judge who sits on the throne.
His judgments are righteous and inescapable, the results come from Him alone.
Every thought, every word, every work addressed is evaluated by holy eyes.
There is no avoiding the lasting consequences of life after a person dies.

For those who in gratitude faithfully serve the God they know and love;
There will be full recognition from the Judge of all according to the light we have.
Glory and honor, peace is there too because of the works that are done.
The Righteous Judge knows the reason behind each and every one.

"Holy, Righteous God - the Judge of all mankind: in reverence I approach Thee this morning to honor Thee and to pray that the activities engaged in yesterday, and

those before me this day, will meet with Thy divine approval and can be blessed by Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 2:11-12

NO RESPECT OF PERSONS

It is common practice for people to think more highly of some people than they do of others. A person's occupation, family name, social position and wealth or lack of it affects our attitude towards each other. Very seldom do we meet or even know of a person who acts impartially toward all men. But with God, it is very different. He always sees through holy eyes and measures every one by His truth. Our tendency toward partiality is in view of how it will be to our "advantage." God's impartiality as the Righteous Judge, is true because He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart of every person, not just their deeds.

God's righteous judgment is not only because one has committed sin, but because there has been a choice made to sin. When a person has been given light, by that degree of light they will be judged. People are not condemned for what they don't know, but for what they do with what they know. There is a difference made between people based on their responsibility to the light.

The light of the law which the Jews had (and by which the knowledge of sin is clearly defined) gave them precise guidelines for living. If they choose sin, there is the condemnation of the written law against them. The evil works of those who never had the law, are enough to judge them righteously because there is light in every man. In both cases the choice of going against the light they have is why they will perish.

"Perish" does not mean a person is annihilated. It does mean that the reason for one's existence in the first place has been misplaced by the choice to sin they have made. That choice has eternal consequences. Whether condemned by the law of conscience and the light one has, or condemned by the written moral law - both will experience eternal punishment. Eternal life when refused for the "pleasures of sin for a season," will never be experienced by those who reject the light. "They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

To favor one above another is a very common response,
To those who are of our flesh and blood, or who showed favor to us once.
But God looks not on the outward appearance, nor measures as we do.
His judgments are righteous in every way, they are in every way so true.

Respect of persons is a human thing; we choose who we want to honor.
It may be those of wealth and fame, maybe a son or daughter.
This seems natural to us because we are limited in what we know,
And form our opinions based on what we see, those are the things that show.

But with God there are no hidden features, no areas of life concealed.
The just judgments of a righteous and holy God make every part revealed.
There are no snap decisions with God, judgments are made by the light,
Of what a person knew wherever they lived, they are conscious of wrong and right.

In every society and culture there are standards acceptable for living.
When those standards are strayed from, in that way they are sinning.
The light they have might be dim, but in every human being,
There is a nature that rebels against restraint wanting what to themselves is pleasing.

The conscience of man dictates standards even if no one else is around.
To ignore that inner warning means in spite of ignorance, one is found
To be in the place of the condemned, and God the Judge they will face.
They will recognize righteous justice even if they're from some obscure place.

The law makes the knowledge of sin to be easily understood by men.
And because they have written laws, much more is expected of them.
No matter what privilege or lack, something is the same in all.
The will of God is disregarded, willful sin was passed on by "the fall."

No matter the basis we live under, one fact is unmistakably clear;
Men want to do "their own thing," they do not want God to interfere.
But on the calendar of events of every one who has lived;
There will be a just recompense given based on the light we have.

"O Righteous God, may it please Thee to give those who are spreading Thy Word all over this world, the right message of light and life the listeners need to hear. It has

been hard for me to give a message to those who do not want to even hear it. Open to Thy servant areas of service for Thee. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 2:13-16

"DOERS," NOT "HEARERS"

To hear the law of God read or to read it for one's self, does not mean a person is pleasing God. There is greater responsibility to obey when greater privilege has been given. The judgment of God is according to performance of what one knows and the light of truth one has. "To whom much is given, much is required." The truth of God does nothing for a person who does not obey it. To rest in a false sense of peace because of one's knowledge of truth is a great deception that will lead to great condemnation. The "doing" of the law does not clear us from the guilt of sin, but is the response of one who knows that is what God's judgment calls for.

All over the world in the many cultures that differ from others, people care for the sick, restrain from murder and in other ways are a law to themselves because as moral beings they are aware of right and wrong. They are not fulfilling the "work" of the law, the written words, but there are standards the human conscience establishes. In spite of those inward workings of conscience, people do not live up to their own standards. Human beings are stubborn, willful people and often choose to cross the parameters and barriers of our own making for the sake of pleasure, personal advantage or just because a prohibition is there. Even when the law is written, there is the need of "the work of the law" within to make one do what is right.

We all have to admit to our sinful humanity because none of us have lived up to any standard of righteousness, written or not. Often, we fail to live up to our own standards, much more to God's standards. So the judgment of God's is according to what we do, not what we hear. And there is another judging principle - the secrets of the heart. All secret things will be brought into the light of God's holiness. Every believer will be brought to the judgment seat of Christ where the "hidden things" will be brought into the light, and the "counsels of the heart" will be seen for what they are. The motives behind the "doing" will be examined and praise from God will be righteous and just praise.

Those who are unsaved and unforgiven will have their secrets judged by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Righteous Judge, appointed by God to expose the secrets of men. There is no redemption for sin offered there. No one is exempt from that judgment even if they didn't have the privileges others had. Those of greater privileges will have more severe judgment because of the favor that was shown to them which they rejected. The choice to sin is the subject that is being judged. All have sinned by nature, but the choice to not obey the creation of God, the goodness of God and one's own conscience, leaves one openly condemned.

"Christian" privilege and "Christian" profession will not cover the choice of not trusting Christ as one's own personal Savior nor living out that personal testimony before men. Those who didn't have that privilege of hearing the Gospel, will be judged by the law written in their hearts. Judgment will be based on the accusation or approval of one's own conscience and conduct. There is a righteous work written in the heart of everyone that is maintained by the conscience each one has. Long before there was a written law, the law was in the heart of man. From that law no one can escape.

Many, stop at the gods of this world to worship what they can see;
Or make with their hands a carving to depict the god they want to be.
But these are only excuses to avoid the working of conscience within;
For God has implanted in everyone an innate consciousness of Him.

In order to stifle the conscience mankind has imposed His own thought;
Not admitting to the honest seeker God will reveal what His grace has wrought.
In every nation and people those who truly seek Him will always find,
He is there to reveal Himself to every heart and every searching mind.

We have the problem of being willful and wanting things in our own way.
To submit to a righteous and holy God means to admit we have gone astray.
This disturbs our peace and our conscience and makes us to face our sin.
Then we find we are condemning ourselves and we must put our faith in Him.

Not everyone has the same light, to whom much is given, much is required.
Some have only the personal evidences, others have the Word of God inspired
By the Holy Spirit who clarifies things that once were dark,
And who helps is to believe on Him, or from that great light to depart.

The Gospel that is preached brings light that is accepted or refused.
Everyone has opportunity to have faith in God, no one has an excuse.
But to turn away from the light of the Gospel is a greater condemnation;
Because Gospel truth when received, results in the soul's salvation.

In a way it is much easier to believe when the whole message comes to our ears.
The creation, goodness and conscience voices speak to our inner fears.
So, the Gospel is good news to all men but it must be personally believed.
Those who never heard it must put faith in Him according to the light they received.

"Gracious God, my heavenly Father: I do thank Thee for giving me the privilege of hearing Thy Gospel all of my life. And I thank Thee for allowing me to tell it to others. May Thy light and Thy truth be proclaimed and reach many dark hearts today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

CONSCIENCE

There is no excuse for people to not understand the fact of responsibility to divine authority. God has placed in the heart of every person, the part of our human spirit called "the conscience" to make us aware of the right and wrong of situations that come across our paths. The natural course of mankind generally is to do what pleases me at the moment rather than what I know is right. It is so easy for the conscience to be ignored. After that comes the searing of the conscience, and then it seems that the light goes out of the conscience.

The blinding of the conscience is no excuse for wrong behavior or belief, because it is my choice to obey or disobey it at the beginning. When we make a choice of any kind, we must accept the consequences of that choice and all that follows afterward. How sad it is when we do not take advantage of that built in regulator that He has placed within us. From all religions, walks of life, nationalities, and cultures will come people before the Judge of all the earth to face Him who they had ignored.

"Father in heaven: I want to be able to take advantage of this inbuilt messenger of righteousness Thou hast placed in every person Thou hast created in Thine own image. If there is some way, I can help this be awakened in people during public speaking or some serving method, then please make it known to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. "

SECRETS OF MEN

A day is coming in which sinners shall stand;
Made plain by God, but misunderstood by man;
In which the law within men or the law of the land;
Will condemn the sinner, as God has planned.

It was not His will that men be lost;
Just look at Calvary, and see the cost
He placed on sin, when on the cross,
All our iniquities were laid on Christ.

In a coming day, Jesus Christ on the throne,
Will pass judgment on those who would not own
Christ as Savior, but thought they would go it alone;
And said about hell, "There really is none."

God is just, and gives all men time,
To consider creation that they might find
Evidence to be seen, and truth line by line;
And put faith in the Savior of all mankind.

Excuses won't work in that coming day;
Standing before Him, you will have nothing to say;
He is the One who the price of sin did pay;
He is the only Life, Truth and The Way.

The law of the lawless is in the heart;
The law of the lawful that makes conscience smart;
According to the Gospel that was preached from the start;
Demands we keep it fully, not just a part.

When the day finally comes to judge the secrets of men;
All will be revealed when men stand before Him.
He knows what's been hidden, all is open then
Before the eyes of Him who judges earth and heaven.

“O God in heaven who revealeth secrets: the facts of the Gospel that have been delivered to me, are such that I must warn men that all will be exposed when they stand before Jesus Christ. In our day people seem to think that God is going to overlook almost every thing. They must be warned that You are going to reveal every thing - even their secrets. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 2:17-20

THE FORM

There were in the day of the writing of this letter, those who were Jews and as such were greatly privileged to have the law. His knowledge of the will of God allowed him to test the teaching and "approve" the things that were wrong and the things that were right. He took the place of being a guide, a light, a corrector of those who didn't know the truth of God - and a teacher. He had "the form" of a learned person, and professed to know the truth of God and God's will for others. The outward form and knowledge were not what constituted truth. Truth involves both the statement and the fact being experienced.

As those who are "Christians" today, the same principle holds true. God's judgment is according to what is real, not what religious people profess or even teach. This seventh principle of God's just judgment will be applied to those who take the place of leadership in teaching the Word of God and preaching God's Gospel. These principles are given to make men awake to the truth about themselves and the false hopes they pride themselves in. These are descriptions of how God judges in order that people awaken to the truth, and not deny or ignore it.

These truths about the Gospel are also so that those ungodly people in chapter one, and the self-righteous and smugly complacent religious people in chapter two will be awakened. The fact is, both the ungodly and self-righteous are condemned because of their sin, and the judgment of God is upon them. These condemning words are to stir them to repent and believe the Gospel.

In frank but careful words the writer gives warnings to those,
Who in apathy and complacency claim they are the ones God chose
To be His representatives and make sure other people follow their lead.
And to every word of instruction they give, others must give earnest heed.

Their self-confidence in all they know, to them is full and plenty.
Without concern for their own inner life they pass judgment on the many
Who are not like them and are considered hopeless unless they heed their words.
These judgmental people forget one thing, they too are judged by the Lord.

A form of knowledge and of truth is not what God intended to be.
He desires truth in the "inner parts," places that men don't see.
Forms can be taken or left if that is what the instructor will choose.
But what a condemnation is on him if those who hear him their souls will lose.

A guide of the blind must be able to see or both will fall into the ditch.
One who is supposed to be a light in the dark should know what he is to teach.
There are many who have not learned because they never knew
The truth they are expecting an honest instructor to give and what he should show.

When there are children and those who are childlike, we are there to reach,
By making the truth simple to them that we their hearts can teach.
Without living out in truth what we profess to really hold
People will reject the words we say no matter what they are told.

The things I teach to others I must be careful myself to live out.
It is important to test and prove what I hear and what I tell people about.
There are so many voices and everyone loudly claims to be right
The consequences are so important - people must see the light.

“Heavenly Father, these truths that I teach and preach about must be lived out in my own life. I fear greatly that I will be inconsistent and the hearers will spew out all that I have said as foolish and unimportant. By Thy grace and power, please strengthen

Thy servant to be one who practices what he preaches. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 2:21-29

DISHONORING GOD

I learn that it is possible to teach others things that I have not learned myself. The truths of God's law were not the minimum requirements for pleasing God any more than the Gospel is teaching the minimum requirements for getting into heaven. The law was a guideline for living in accordance with God's will. It is possible for teachers to teach others but choose not to follow their own teaching. Far more searching is the explanations the Lord Jesus Christ gave when He taught what the law really meant. Withholding what should be given, a lustful look, a false accusation while teaching holy things is blatant hypocrisy. It is easier to tell others what to do and how to behave, than to behave properly ourselves. Words may be spoken that are right but I must take, and act, upon my own advice.

Money has a way of turning people away from God. But there probably is nothing more despised in a Christian preacher or teacher, than making appeals for money and at the same time living in luxury and an extravagant life-style. The man who knows what the scriptures say about immorality, and teaches that, and then turns and is unfaithful, is abhorrent to all who heard him and followed his teaching.

When those who preach the Gospel explain the truth of God, we must honor God both outwardly and inwardly. We dare not act in such a way as to give non-Christians a reason to accuse us of hypocrisy and cause them to blaspheme the name of God. Truth has to be known and felt in the soul before it is spoken out publicly. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

The circumcision of the heart begins when one hears the truth of God himself, either from another person or through the voice of God speaking in the scriptures of truth. A listener might not know much of God's truth, God's will and God's word, but when they hear of the righteousness of God, they repent of their sin and the circumcision of the heart begins. The love and grace of God brings them to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. They put their personal faith in Him alone - that is circumcision of the heart. Someone whose heart is made right with God is the "real Jew" who honors God.

Such a person is made a member of God's family and an heir of all that God promises to them who believe in Him. This is not based on external forms and judgments but on inner changes brought about by the new birth. One who is a new creation in Christ Jesus is not just a church attendee or one who has been baptized. A new nature has been imparted to that person and there is now a desire for things they once abhorred. The things that once were so important are no longer because love for God, a desire to obey Him and please Him, a desire for on-going fellowship with God is real to that person. The reality of being a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has removed any desire to appear to be one thing and actually another person inside. Now our desire is to have praise from God not men - and to give praise to God not men. The heart and spirit, not the "letter of the law," is the source of our preaching and teaching - and our joy!

What is about the outward show that makes it so despised;
People hear the words we say, but watch us living lies.
That inconsistent way of living turns people from spoken truth.
And they will be caused to believe the Bible is of little worth.

To say one thing and do another has always been a sin.
One needs to search the heart and spirit before one even begins
To tell other people the Gospel message so that they might be saved.
I need to review not just the truth, but how I do behave.

It dishonors God to profess to speak for Him and not obey His Word.
I have no right to speak for Him if I don't honor Him as Lord.
Holy things that are spoken must be reinforced by my life.
But that is only meaningful if I am walking in the light.

There is no way to expect people to believe if I don't practice what I preach.
Reality in my life must be seen if others I am seeking to reach
With the Gospel and the truth of God that will affect destiny and life change,
It is incumbent on me to determine if there are things to rearrange.

People hear my words, but see gestures and facial expressions too.
The words I speak are acceptable if they are consistent with what I do.

The "Lord's messenger in the message" are not written words so trite.
They are evidence to others that what I have to say is right.

It is impossible to hide reality from all those folks who watch.
If what they see is winsome to them, the message they might catch.
It is not the praise of men I need but the approval of a holy God,
That alone can give weight and power when I stand to speak a word.

"Lord God who knows the heart, I pray this morning that Thou will keep Thy servant from being "wordy" and self-righteous when speaking publicly. May all that I have to say be supported by what I am and do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

OUTWARD OR INWARD

I know that naturally, I would be concerned with what others expect of me. But I learn that I can do what seems to be right, and is declared to be right by the law – that it has no real value to it if it is not from my heart.

A person who has never been religious or has never even had a chance to grow very much in the things of God, is in a better condition before God if he has a simple, basic response like, "OK God, whatever You want from me, is fine with me."

Another person may be really concerned that everything he does is just right. He says the right words; his words are in the right place; he stands just right and sits just right; he dresses just right and reads out of the right version of the Bible. But if it is just the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law – all he gets is the praise of men like the Pharisees – not praise from God.

"O Father, please help me never to fake it or try to be something I am not. At the same time, Father, I do not want to be careless or indifferent about holy things. I really need help to be kept totally honest. I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ORACLES OF GOD

When one has been given the responsibility of receiving and committing to use the "oracles of God" – His laws, His word, His truth, His revealed mind, His will; that person has a huge responsibility. This commitment is more than priestly garments, for they are put on the outside to impress other men of an important role to be fulfilled. This commitment is more than public participation in worship or service, for this can be learned and practiced by repetition. This commitment is more than leading a group of people down the path of truth and righteousness, for this can be done properly but for the wrong motives.

A Jew inwardly, knows who he is because he knows who God is. He knows who God is because he knows God. He knows God because he has put personal faith in Him. He has personal faith in God because he knows who he is himself. He knows who he is himself because he knows God's Word. He knows God's Word because he has read it for himself. He has read it for himself because he has realized his own need and spiritual condition before God. He knows he needs God and has accepted, in a personal way, the provision God has made to meet his need. He knows that as a genuine believer, he cuts off deliberately, anything that is not like God and/or does not please God. He knows that "cutting off" is not just an external act, but takes place in the inner recesses of the heart in order to be genuine. He knows the form or letter of a thing, is far exceeded by the spirit of the matter.

The true Jew wants to hear the commendation of God, rather than the sweet talk of men. The true Jew knows the difference of a "well done" from the voice of deity, and the "right on" from the lips of humanity. The true Jew knows that praise from God has no underlying or ulterior motives, but the praise of men may be given for a selfish reason. The true Jew is confident that the praise of God has surpassing significance but the praise of men, for the most part, has no real value.

"My Father in heaven: Please keep me from being satisfied with what I see or men say. I want to live and serve Thee without being the object of human praise, but that all glory for every thing, big or little, will all go to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

ROMANS 3:1-8

PRIVILEGE AND PROFIT

The ungodly who are condemned by overt sinful practices, and the humanitarians and religious people who think God should accept them on the basis of their works and pedigree, find themselves facing the logic of

truth. In a series of questions and answers, the Jewish objections to God's way of salvation and the righteousness of God is addressed. What is the point of, or advantage of having the law, if all true circumcision is only inward? What benefit is there in hearing the Gospel when one is young? Isn't it worse that we were brought up in a Christian home or environment?

Answer: the opposite is true. Jews were blessed by knowing God's will. We have been blessed because God has revealed Himself to us through the scriptures. We have been able to see the results of faith in God, by watching those who live by faith. The holy scriptures with promises and prophecies, give us the privilege of light and truth being revealed to us. The depressing picture of condemnation of all by our own actions when the law is applied to them, is lifted when we learn the basis of hope is God Himself- not His law.

The Jews who did not believe; who were unfaithful to God's truth revealed in the law and lost God's blessing - isn't God being unfair to them? Those who were sanctified by believing parents and those who taught them the Gospel - isn't God breaking His promise if they die in their sins?

Answer: those who are unfaithful to what they have learned and know, must suffer the consequences of their unbelief. God is always faithful. His word is always justified. When God's truth is challenged, He never breaks faith on His word. His truth always stands fast no matter what men may say or do.

So, if our sin, our unrighteousness increases God's righteousness and fulfills God's purposes, isn't God unfair to judge us? Isn't it unjust if He is a forgiving God and His very nature is love, for Him to condemn us to hell? If sin teaches us important lessons and helps us keep in touch with what is going on in the culture around us, won't God's grace overlook that sin?

Answer: this is twisted human thinking, because if God did not judge the Jews who had the blessings of the law, or those favored by hearing the Gospel some from their youth up, then it would be unfair of Him to pass any judgment on any people anywhere, especially those who are less privileged people. All sinners no matter what their excuses may be, will have to answer to God for their sin.

If sin brings out the truth of God and the goodness of God, why shouldn't people sin more that God might be seen in an even better light? If a person who knows the truth of God and the Gospel message well - why shouldn't he go deeper into sin so that if God saves him, God's grace and mercy would seem greater than ever before? If God is a God of grace, isn't that more obvious the worse our sin is?

Answer: there are dangers in this absurd position and those who believe and teach it have a just damnation coming. There is the imminent danger of a sinner dying in his sins even though they knew the way of salvation well. The Gospel of grace is still being declared and will be until the Lord comes. Many people imagine that they can be accepted by God even if they do not repent of their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Conviction of sin leads to repentance. Repentance leads to faith in Christ alone for salvation, apart from the works of the law or the works of the flesh. No matter what a person may think of himself or what religious gathering they are a part of, God will save them and accept them through Christ alone. He can righteously forgive them because of what the Lord Jesus Christ did on their behalf. Their new nature will lead "the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts."

Never underestimate the advantages and privileges you have.
For reasons known only to God, He was willing to give
His word containing truth that we might on Him believe,
Before the tentacles of sin and the world around us weave.

As the day of grace began, many Jews were not willing to accept,
That God would save any person of any nation who would not Him reject.
They willingly blinded their minds to the fact God sees all men the same,
And bring into covenant relationship any person who would believe on His name.

Those at the beginning of this age thought they were special people.
They could not believe that the God of the Jews sees us all as equals.
To be exempt from God's judgment both the ungodly and righteous,
Had to be forgiven by the blood of redemption before God could accept us.

Now at the end of the dispensation of grace the same fact holds true.
The shed blood of Christ saves from sin, not "the gospel according to you."
All the world is guilty by nature, and works will not make us free.
Only believing on, and receiving Christ as Savior, gives life eternally.

The variety of religions and the individual opinions of men,
Have nothing to do for, or add to, the salvation God offers us when
We pay attention to what God says and we respond to Him in faith.
Then all works of men are abandoned and we are saved only by His grace.

The privileges we have been given are that we might believe God's Word.
And through the channel of scripture are led to trust only in the Lord.
God is, and always has been, faithful, in no way is He unjust,
When He expects us to see that through His light, He expects us Him to trust.

“Father in heaven, the great and gracious God: I have no doubt at all in Thy desire for all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. And I thank Thee for being so longsuffering to me and those around me. Many have heard and known Thy Word and have turned away from it. Have mercy on them, O God, and draw them to Thyself in whatever way is needed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 3:9-18

ALL UNDER SIN

The indictment is in from the Supreme Judge of all - "all under sin." Not just guilty of sin, or bound by sin, but all under sin. All of us - human beings, no matter what our background, religious creed, race or cultural heritage - by nature we have been brought under the evil power of sin and are by nature in that terrible state. No one is innocent. No one can earn the right to be righteous before God. This doesn't devalue the worth of a human being, but our natural condition of sin makes us unacceptable to be righteous before God. These fourteen counts against us leave all of us, Jews and Gentiles, exposed to the righteous wrath of the Holy God.

In ourselves no one has ever been able to stand before God in his or her own righteousness. If we truly understood divine things by our human nature, we would have been so humbled we couldn't say a word. But instead, all kinds of people write or speak of their explanations of God. The temples built for worshipers to attend, are not because people are seeking after God. They are seeking after a god of their own imaginations who can be bent by their own will and can be accepted on their own terms. The Sovereign, Holy God is not sought after, but is being avoided for He convicts the sinner of sin, righteousness and judgment. In an act of self-will, they have deliberately turned away from the way of God contrary to what God has clearly defined. The whole race of man has made that awful turn. The result of all of this as the Universal Judge looks upon us, is that we are all together and totally unprofitable, unfit for any use that was planned for by God. There is corruption rather than holiness. Instead of goodness and kindness, there is selfishness and cruelty. By divine standards, we are all condemned.

Then the all-seeing Physician puts a tongue depressor in our mouths and looks down our throat to see the state of our spiritual health. A terrible scent of death comes from our inward parts. The tongue itself cannot be trusted to speak the truth. The words that lie just behind our lips are filled with fatal poison just waiting to be released and kill others with false accusations or falsehoods spoken as if they are true words. Those who hear and believe those words will not only be lost but in bitterness of soul, will curse men and God for the deception and misleading words. The Great Physician then looks at the extremities and sees that their feet are unrestrained and they run to eliminate any who do not agree with them or condemn them and their actions in any way. Their reaction against righteousness and truth is to kill it once and for all.

God now looks upon mankind with the eyes of one who sees from eternity to eternity. To Him all of history is one eternal "now." The history of mankind is basically measured by the wars and misery caused by the destruction of conflict. Peace that lasts is foreign to humanity. Wisdom and righteousness get in the way of the unregenerate human will, and self-will leads only down the road of misery and suffering. These lead to ruin to both parties involved in conflicts. Peace interferes with man's ambition, so is not experienced by humanity as a whole - and never has been.

The last indictment of unregenerate humanity is the worst one of all. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." In mankind's moral stupidity there is no reverence for God, no sense of the greatness and power of God, no acknowledgment of the authority of God over men - let alone the whole universe. All the natural man sees is what he wants to see. For some it is material gain that is before his eyes. Others see only pleasure. Still others see only what will gratify the flesh. The Just, Holy and Almighty God is not considered, because the natural man only sees with the eyes of his fleshly desires, not with the eyes of faith. So the Supreme Judge; the Great Physician and the God of history can only indict us by saying, "There is none righteous, no not one." "The is no fear of God before their eyes." What a warning this is to all who read these words!

There is no way to escape the inevitable conclusion that must be made -
No matter what we may think of ourselves, our nature is inherently bad.
We often will try to avoid looking at things through God's eyes.
But the description of humanity seen here, is to bring us all down to size.

We need to read and heed what God has to say about us.
There is a lesson to learn, there is nothing in man we can trust,
By nature, and practice there is none that is can be said of, "He's good!"
Humanity as a whole would not submit to God even if they could.

The outward conditions of man leave us condemned by the Righteous Judge.
Understanding is absent in men; it is obvious by what mankind does.
Their search in life is in all the wrong places, from God they have turned away.
Not only are men unprofitable to God, there is no good in what we do and say.

Before the Great Physician the prognosis is not good at all.
The terrible scent from the inward parts has affected us since the fall.
Deceitful tongues are a problem to all and poison is in the mouth to cause pain.
Even their feet run to do evil to others, not just once but again and again.

Looking back over the history of mankind that when started in Eden seemed bright,
Now the One who sees all that is done, knows each one born is a child of the night.
There is always agitation, nothing satisfies, real peace seems to always evade them.
Even when confronted with a Just, Almighty God, there is no reverential fear before Him.

What really can be done to bring people back to what God wanted them to be.
There is no way to dress up what is ruined; sin-stained works of man are not the key.
We all need to face this basic fact, our only hope is death to sin, and a new nature.
God knows that well, so by His grace alone, He gives new life by a perfect Savior.

"O Holy, Righteous and Gracious God: the proof is everywhere for us to see. We have sinned; we have failed; we are totally undone as a race of people. I am so thankful that Thou hast begun a whole new line of people who have been born of the Spirit and are cleansed of their sin by the blood of Christ. It is with a sense of unworthiness and humility - but gratitude - that I thank Thee for making me one of them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

ROMANS 3:19-20

THE LAW

The verdict is in from the Great Judge; the Great Physician has rendered His decision as to the condition of all mankind; and the Great Historian of all the ages has given His indictment of the failure of mankind to be justified by his works. From every point of view, all that can be said is, "Guilty before God." So, the Jews who had taken the high ground as law-keepers, and the Gentiles who have an inner law, are both condemned by the law. Talk of one's own "goodness" and the "badness" we perceive in others is over. The whole human race must stand with bowed heads as the Judge, Physician and Historian, leave us all without a word to say in our defense.

No one is declared righteous by the law. No one is cleared of all guilt by the law. No one is made fit for heaven by the deeds of the law. No one is able to be accepted by God because of the law. People may have their own ideas as to what is right. Other people will fight for their own convictions. Still others will claim they have had direct revelations from God. The religious have their ideas or idols - but the law condemns every one because the law was given that we might "have the knowledge of sin." So what is the point of having the law? It is holy, and just, and good. It reveals what God approves of and what He forbids. It sets the standard for man's obedience. It gives a basis for condemnation when failure to obey it occurs.

The law condemns sin and when broken by man who sins - it condemns man. Keeping one or two laws if it were possible, does not negate the condemnation by the law for those broken in the past, nor does it remove guilt from the present. Law-keeping was never God's way of salvation or of the cleansing blessing from God. Faith has always been - and still is the only way to please God.

The principle of faith has been how God has dealt with man and his sin from the time of Abel who offered the right sacrifice, to this present day. Abraham responded to God's promise by faith. Every person who has come into a saving relationship with God, has done so on the basis of faith alone - not on faith plus anything

else. The only way anyone would ever admit he is a sinner and a failure in himself is by the holy righteous rule of law. The law's ministry was condemnation and death for sin - and it has done this well.

God has never changed His plan of acceptance of us. It has always been, and still is, on the basis of faith in Him. The law does not add anything to faith to make us more acceptable. God never expected man to do what he could not do - that is, keep the law perfectly; then, because man failed, change to a "by grace ye are saved," plan. The law was given that sin might abound, not grace. It has revealed clearly guilt, sinfulness and our helplessness to save ourselves.

The mercy and grace of God has always been the only way of salvation. It tells us the Gospel message so that from Adam to every person today, mercy and grace are there as the basis of forgiveness of sin when a guilty sinner, condemned by the law he had broken, repents of sin and turns in personal faith to Christ alone for salvation. Sovereign mercy and sovereign grace are there to act on behalf of the sinner who is convicted of sin by "the works of the law."

It was carefully designed by God for the benefit of man.
Holy men were chosen that for God Himself they would pen,
The words of the scriptures so that when people read,
They would know how God intended them to live when His truth they heed.

These qualities were put together with a special reason in mind,
So that by reading them together a true picture we will find
Of how God sees us compared to His law in our natural state.
And a realistic view of ourselves we are then able to make.

To admit our need and guilt is very humbling to our pride.
With the law of God made plain to us we have no place to hide
From the righteous demands of the law that exposes outer and inner sin -
Bringing us all guilty before the Judge and condemns all before Him.

Even if we could keep some, what can we do about those we fail.
Perfection in everyone of them always is what keeping the law entails.
Some things we just have to face as facts, all of us are sinners before God.
The law condemns us everyone, we have failed in deed and word.

The whole point of the written law then becomes very clear.
It is not by the works we do that to a holy God we draw near -
But by the perfections of God's righteous law we can easily see,
It is only by the imputed righteousness of Christ, that we can righteous be.

So the law is good because by it we know where before God we stand.
We don't have acceptance by our words or the works of our hands.
The law makes it plain we cannot come to God except by faith,
In the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who has saved us by His grace.

"Father in heaven, this day is one in which we are kind of at leisure to do what we want to do. Help me this day to be able to speak and act righteously before my family. I ask Thee to make it plain to me how I can best be an example to them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

GUILTY BEFORE GOD

Whatever has happened to the human race? Why are human beings so far removed from what God intended? The insidiousness of sin has permeated into our relationships with others and it has kept going further to the place where respect and honor for God is gone. The rules are in place but they don't work without the righteousness of God being imputed to us. The laws tell us what is wrong, but knowing that doesn't change behavior. The law makes it plain I am guilty and under the judgment of God. But how can that bring the change that leads to a right relationship with God? It can not make the change. But it can make me stop talking and listen to a higher authority.

When that happens, God is there with His Word to clarify not only what is wrong, but to instruct me as to what is right.

"I praise Thee, O God, for not leaving me in the darkness that a broken law produces, but for giving me light from Thy Word to show me Thy righteousness and how to come into the good of it. I honor Thee here, this morning, for doing this by Thy grace, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 3:21

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Against the black background of sin exposed in all its awfulness by the law, a new and joyful message is given. Apart from any law, any law-keeping, any works of man at all, the righteousness of God is brought to light. The law had testified to this in the sacrifices that were offered. The prophets spoke of it in direct statements given to people who were adding their own twists and turns to what God had said. But now, at the cross and at the empty tomb, the righteousness of God is revealed. God chose to reveal Himself in marvelous, matchless grace. The great motive behind this act of reconciliation was that God wanted to reveal His righteousness because God is Love.

God's righteousness is absolute in its nature and in its revelation. Absolute righteousness demands absolute perfection. God "did not spare His own Son" when He was delivered up for us all. The wages of sin were placed on the Lord Jesus Christ and were publicly dealt with. The righteousness that God demanded was vindicated right out in public. "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

God acted in righteousness when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him as a man in heaven at the place of honor and glory. He now gives those who believe in Christ the same acceptance as Christ has. It would have been unrighteous if God had not raised Him from the dead. Now those who have trusted Christ alone for salvation have Christ, risen and glorified, as our righteousness. We are not made righteous "before" God because that would mean we have a personal standing rather than a legal standing. We are united to Christ, so we are made the righteousness of God "in Him." In Him we died, in Him we are raised, and in Him we stand in the place of the justified.

In Christ we are justified from "all things." The ungodly person who has ceased from trying to make himself righteous and believes on Him, is reckoned righteous because of the substitution of Christ on the cross for him. He is the righteousness of God because Christ is the righteousness of God, and the believer is accepted in Christ - in the Beloved! What Christ is, so are we.

God acting in His own holiness, did not compromise anything when He placed us in Christ. The believing sinner, because the righteous judgment of his sin was already dealt with when God laid his sins on Christ at the cross, is righteous in God's eyes. We do not need any "standing" because Christ is our standing. We have no other place but in Him. No longer are we sons of Adam in this world, but sons of God in Christ. God was glorified in Christ and is glorified by those who are in Christ. This is because we "are seated with Christ in the heavenlies."

We are confronted with the fact that in spite of being made the "righteousness of God in Him," we are still subject to the trials and temptations of living in the world. We do sin. This has nothing to do with our judicial standing before God and our righteousness in Him. These things have to do with my communion with God and my life on earth for God. The work of Christ when He was made sin for us, puts away sin from God's sight forever. Any and all law has no claim on the one who is in Christ, because we are alive in Him.

What beautiful light and what a beautiful sight,
To be forever found "in Christ".
It is amazing to believe that when Christ I received,
There took place an eternal tryst.
No law can condemn as it once did when
First it revealed my guilt.
Now no law demands I heed its commands,
For "in Christ" every demand is filled.

God has revealed what once was concealed.
His righteous demands are filled.
Through His grace alone, what was once atoned,
Has the legality of the law upheld.
The law and the prophets, wrote and talked about it,
Now it is an accomplished fact.
Because Christ died for sins, I may now enter in -
Righteousness given to me is an actual act.

"In Christ" is a position, much more than a condition,
God looks on me and sees me in Him.
His righteousness remains, He is always the same,

But in grace, accepts a perfect Sacrifice for sin.
So now in Christ I am found on redemption ground,
Accepted by God legally.
No longer trying to be free, there's been imparted to me
A standing in Christ righteously.

"I have been marveling all morning, Father, at Thy wisdom and grace that has made it possible to both hear Thee, and speak to Thee in this way - without being an imposter or a deceiver. Thy righteousness has never and never will be, compromised. And yet, I am experiencing this standing - this holy standing in Thy presence because of Thy great grace. I praise and thank Thee today for giving Thy Son as the Substitute for this unworthy sinner. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 3:22-23

THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

Now in this journey through Romans it is clearly stated that the perfections of God's righteousness are completely filled through the Person of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of God concerning the death, burial and resurrection of Christ provides the benefits we need to be accepted by a Righteous God. God justifies a man who is not righteous because the basis of saving us is the sacrifice of Christ. He completely bore our sin and has been raised by God that we might be justified through Him. The infinite and final work that Christ has done is reckoned to us.

The blood of Christ is the reason God can declare an ungodly man righteous. God's grace alone is the cause of that declaration. Our faith doesn't add to the work of Christ in any way. Faith is the way we come into that work and it is counted for righteousness because it gives God all the credit for salvation. Faith concerning Jesus Christ is exercised by accepting what God says as true. We rely on the testimony of God about Christ and redemption through Him alone. We believe God's Word that what He says has been done and it is done for us. We rest in what has been done - the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. The Father's testimony about the Son is true and has happened.

This blessing has taken place and therefore is unto all. Nothing more can be done or makes it more real than it already is. God's righteousness is a fact based on faith in Christ, in contrast to any legal righteousness man seeks to attain by law keeping or any other means.

There is no difference or distinction between Jews and Gentiles as to the fact of sin being passed on to all. The difference we would consider between a great sinner or small sinner is not distinguished here. The facts are - all have sinned. Greater or lesser is not the issue. "All have sinned" and are fallen short of the righteousness of God. We have all sinned because one man sinned and death has passed upon all men. But that is not the whole explanation of the problem - every individual since then (apart from the Lord Jesus Christ) has fallen short of God's glory. We are not in a position to only blame Adam for our sin, because we also have fallen (present) short of what God intended. We are ruined in sin by the fall of Adam and we daily fall short of the glory of God by our own sin.

Only in and through Christ alone can we find redemption and deliverance from sin. Whether religious or irreligious, Jew or Gentile, small or great, famous or infamous - we all fall short and can only through faith in Jesus Christ be counted righteous by God.

There is no righteous act that we can in any way do,
That makes us acceptable to God, but faith alone that is through
Jesus Christ alone, His saving cross-work has been done.
In His redemptive sacrifice God sees us in His Son,
And can confer upon us the righteousness of Christ
That comes to us as a free gift, but He paid for it at great price,
When the righteousness of God found in Him a perfect substitute,
And on the basis of what Christ did, His righteousness did impute.

It is not of any attribute, any personal merit, or any work,
That we have or could put forth that God did in His grace impart.
The blessing of God in saving grace was not in any way by man earned;
That only comes to us when Christ and His sacrifice are not spurned.
Directed to us is this righteousness revealed through the reading of God's Word,
And it guides us to the testimony of those who believe and call Him Lord.
No matter who a person is or the kind of life they've lived,
The righteousness that God expects is through Christ on whom we believe.

Some may try to differentiate as to sin and its degree.
But of this unmistakable fact all of us have to agree;
We all have sinned without a doubt and by sin we are condemned.
Everyone has come short of God's glory; death is upon all men.
There is no comparison between those who sin whether many or few.
The fact remains that all of us have sinned, and though we knew -
Sin is what separates from God, we did not stop until,
Sin found us all condemned before God, that was a bitter pill.

But God be praised! There is a way for us to get back to God.
The full redemption price has been paid by Christ's redeeming blood.
Through faith in Him the righteousness of God can by us be known -
For Christ Himself has satisfied that the blood of His own -
Which satisfied once and for all the legal claims against us laid,
And through faith in Jesus Christ we rest in the debt paid
On our behalf that from sin's claims we could be free.
That price was paid long ago, but is in effect for eternity.

"O Gracious God, the description of us all as sinners certainly is true and the awful fact of coming short of Thy glory is convicting. But I thank Thee this morning with a heart full of gratitude that Thou hast given the blessing of being righteously accepted through faith in Jesus Christ. I do believe the deed was done which shook the earth, and veiled the sun. I do thank Thee and give Thee all the praise and glory for imparting Thy righteousness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

JUSTIFIED FREELY

Righteousness provided by Jesus Christ:

Seen in Christ [v.21]

Such righteousness is not unknown, for perfection is in Christ Jesus alone.

Available in Christ [v.22]

Remarkably though, it's available to us, when we on the Savior place our trust.

Essential for all [v.22-23]

The problem of sin would not go away, unless the Savior was willing to pay.

Available for all [v.24-25]

To be justified freely by His grace is available to all, whom are willing on Jesus Christ to call.

Justification in three ways [v.25-26]

Propitiation – turning away God's wrath; remission – passing over; declaration – free at last.

Justification by faith, not works [v.27-30]

Faith alone, there's nothing to do; by faith alone God justifies you.

Justification by faith confirms the law [v.31]

The law has done convicting work as a teacher; justification by grace is a legal feature.

"O God of all grace: the wonder of being justified, creates a depth of thanksgiving and worship from Thy people that often escapes us. To be declared righteous on a legal basis means total freedom. That freedom has not been granted arbitrarily, but with the greatest possible authority behind it. "O joy of the justified, joy of the free." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 3:24

JUSTIFIED FREELY

The contrast of those who have sinned and are unable to cross that barrier to reach God, and the grace of God that extends itself to every person is made so clear in this verse. It is God - God alone - who justifies the guilty sinner. The whole world is pronounced guilty, under sin, by the Righteous, Sovereign Judge. Now He shows Himself in righteous, sovereign grace toward the guilty. He declares, or accounts, us righteous before Himself. He doesn't go about to make us become righteous, but states the fact of a righteous, legal change in our relationship to God.

This change of relationship has been done freely, without charge. This declaration of being righteous has nothing to do with the labor or efforts of any. This is totally apart from our feelings and emotions, our prayers and efforts of penance. We have been accounted righteous by God's reckoning alone. Like the water of life that is given freely, so we have been justified freely by His grace.

Love and grace are both closely linked by the word "charis." The great act of benevolence that we needed was supplied when God "gave His only begotten Son." This grace comes from the infinite God who in infinite love extended to us "His grace." This is not something deserved or earned, or restricted by the law. This is unmerited, unearned favor; that which gives great delight and blessing at no charge to the needy.

This justification has been bestowed by God's grace through the payment for sin made by Christ Jesus. This great salvation we have was provided for and made available to us through the cross-work of Christ Jesus. We are delivered from the penalty of our sins through them being put away forever through the redemption price paid - the precious blood of Christ - not by any corruptible things.

We were under the wrath of God and brought in guilty before Him. There was no pardon for us through the law. We were exposed to righteous judgment by a Great and Just God. But now in this court-room of absolute righteousness, the light that shines brighter than the sun leaving no shadow anywhere - we are accounted righteous in our relationship with God because He has freely justified us by His own grace that is greater than our sin. This has been made available to us because we have been redeemed from sin's penalty through the blood of Christ Jesus. Hallelujah!

There is nothing at all we can say or do of ourselves,
Justification is entirely of God.
No prayers, labors or penance can ever help,
Nothing can be added to the value of the blood.
There is no way we can by ourselves purchase freedom from the guilt of sin,
The price is far too high for us to pay.
By the precious blood of Christ Jesus alone,
My sins have been washed away.

Now I am declared by God to be justified,
He is the One who announced to me,
That by this change of relationship He is satisfied,
To make this justification absolutely free.
The value of this is far greater than
All anyone could ever accumulate.
This is freely made available to every man,
Who will personally the Savior take.

This whole matter of being justified is by God's grace,
It cannot be polluted by the works of men.
We come into the good of this by placing our faith,
On Him who provided it when
He laid on Christ Jesus our load of sin,
And with His blood He paid the redemption price.
Now God does not demand anything from men;
That would mean sin was paid for twice.

To be justified means there is no guilt;
It also means God has drawn near to me.
The cup of righteousness is completely filled,
Imparted by God's grace legally.
My response to that gift is joy and relief;
This slave has been by Christ Jesus redeemed.
Blessing like this is way beyond my reach,
But from that redemption, blessings now continually stream.

"Gracious, Merciful, Heavenly Father: this righteousness that is accounted to me by Thy grace is so precious to me that it defies my words. For Thy grace, for Thy free justification, for the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, I thank Thee with all of my heart. May I be able to worship Thee in Spirit and in truth as I consider throughout this day Thy justification, Thy grace and my redemption. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

ROMANS 3:25

A PROPITIATION

After hundreds, even thousands of years of not punishing human sin but covering it over with the blood of atonement, God now acts to make possible the cleansing of all guilt permanently. He is legally and righteously able to justify us freely by His grace by means of the redeeming work of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross did not just cover over sin temporarily as the sacrifices of the Old Testament did, but as the propitiation for our sins, the just holy wrath of God has now been satisfied by the death of His Son, and the blood He shed to deal once and forever with sin.

It is not just that God is merciful and accepts people at the mercy-seat, but the blood has been shed on behalf of sinners, and God can be propitious toward us because of the proof of sin's price being paid once and for all. It never has to be done again. Christ entered into the presence of God with His own blood and we come into God's presence as those who are accepted because He died for me. The righteousness of God is not compromised in any way. All those years of the past when God did forbear to carry out judgment, there were the sacrifices made that pointed the sinners of the past to the coming Redeemer who would turn the wrath of God aside. His death on the cross was for the remission, the passing over, of sins done from Adam to the cross. Adam and Eve had the skin coats of sinless animals whose blood was shed that Adam and Eve could live. Abel also brought his sacrifice at the appointed time. Down through the generations and in all cultures and nations, people have been trying to propitiate for their own sins in their own way. But the fact is, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission."

God left sin unpunished in the past because He knew that "in the fullness of time" He was going to send His Son to put away sin "by the sacrifice of Himself." There was no animal sacrifice that could put away sin. That could only cover it. No human being could put away our sins because "death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned." So God has demonstrated His righteousness in regard to all sin - past, present and future - when Christ Jesus provided the needed redemption. He could do this because of His perfection as a man. He was one of our own kind and yet perfectly sinless. God could look upon Him with favor and satisfaction that here was One who could deal with God's justice on account of sin. The Righteous, Holy God had to be just, so needed the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ to be a substitute for the sins of the past. He is also the propitiation (turning aside righteous wrath and judgment) for us today.

Where could they go, what could they do to survive the wrath of God?
By His grace God made it possible for sin to be covered by the shedding of innocent blood.
So, for many generations the season would come, and blood would be on the mercy-seat
Temporarily because of that innocent blood, it was possible for God and man to meet.

Into the unfolding pages of history, a singular unique Person came,
Conceived by the Spirit, born of a woman, the messenger said "Jesus" was His name
God sent Him forth, this was no mere accident, the "fullness of the time" had come.
The Righteous, Holy God our Father, to be the Savior of the world sent His Son.

No longer are thousands of animals needed to make an atonement for sin.
The One the Father sent shed His precious blood that we might have salvation through
Him.
The perfections of His Person, the completeness of His work, satisfied God's every
righteous claim.
Now once and for ever God's justice is satisfied, propitiation is made on behalf of all men.

Our sins are remitted the same as those of old, who were wanting to be accepted by God.
The blood of goats on the Day of Atonement has been replaced by Christ's precious blood.
The Lamb of God has come who beareth away the sin of this ungodly world.
And the banner of love over the lost race of man has now been graciously unfurled.

God graciously held back the punishment we all deserved until the cross-work was done.
Remission of sin has been paid for so now forgiveness is offered to everyone.
Those who personally accept the Savior come into the good of propitiation.
And the result that extends now to everyone is the offer of God's salvation.

"I thank Thee God and Father, for making it possible for Thee to look upon this sinner and still accept me. Thy righteous wrath has not been overlooked but the blood of Christ has been shed for me. I thank Thee for dealing with my sins righteously, so no charge can ever be laid against me. I rest and rejoice in this fact and thank Thee gratefully in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 3:26

JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER

Something has happened that initiated the day of grace, "this time," that has, and will, affect mankind for all time - the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The cross and the shed blood of the innocent sacrifice has not just passed over or overlooked sin as it did in the atoning sacrifices of the past, but has dealt with it root and branch. God not only demonstrated His righteousness there, but He demonstrated that He always takes sin seriously.

In the public Judgment Day when Christ died for human sin, God displayed His perfect righteousness. He did not "spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." In the past it seemed like God was not so serious about sin as He really is. His forbearance was in view of the death of Christ that those of faith could see through the sacrifices they brought. Those of honest heart would see beyond the sinless animal to the fact this foreshadowed a death for sin that would satisfy a holy God. In the death of Christ, the righteousness of God was openly displayed in His wrath against sin. In His holy eyes it had to be put away at the highest possible price so no charge could be laid that a holy God had gone soft on sin. In His incomparable love He made it possible for sinners to be delivered from the wrath of the holy justice that was due them.

God has exacted from the death of Christ the full payment of sin that He might be just, and that justice has been fully done once and for all. No more sacrifices for sin can be made that would add anything at all to the sacrifice of Christ. But there is more - God can now righteously and legally in every way, justify sinners who believe in Jesus! He can do that and still be absolutely just! His righteousness was displayed when Christ "was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness (righteous before God) of God in Him."

Now the outcome is we are justified by faith in Him. When with our hearts we believe, we appropriate the work of Christ on our behalf and stand cleared of guilt before God. By virtue of what the Lord Jesus Christ did, and that alone, we can be in the presence of our Holy God and call Him "Father." In the Old Testament, the presence of God and where He dwelt with His people, was "most holy." Now faith in what the Lord Jesus did and faith in Him alone, places us in that most holy place - in the presence of God.

God can forgive us and still be just, because the Lord Jesus Christ has taken the sinner's place. God has not overlooked anything when He "laid on Him the iniquity of us all." His hatred of sin has been able to be turned away and He is able to keep His promise to bless "all the nations of the earth." Our faith is a "most holy faith."

When statements are made in a public forum,
Those declarations are taken to be true.
How much more when it is God who makes them,
That we give them the attention that is due.
God declares His righteousness that demands,
Full and uncompromising punishment for sin.
The righteous justice that should fall on every man,
Fell on Christ when God laid our sins on Him.

God is just, of that fact there is no doubt.
He is uncompromising in every word and deed.
But by His grace He has made to come about,
A way, sinners from the consequences can be freed.
It was not easy, to God the cost was high.
Justice had to be done to satisfy His claims.
It was for our sins the Lord Jesus Christ did die,
Now we are accepted in Jesus' name.

God now is able to righteously welcome,
Everyone who put all their faith in Jesus.
Not convicted now because we have become,
The children of the One who has freed us.
Our faith is in Jesus, in Him alone,
Is our life, our hope and future.
Not only are we at liberty by what He has done,
But He has given to us a new nature.

"O Gracious, Just and Holy God: I know I cannot conceive nor understand the full value of being justified by Thee. But what I do know and understand makes this fact very precious to me, and I appreciate more than I can find words to say. I guess the best I can really do is to thank Thee from my heart, and pray Thee to help me live this day in a way that will not dishonor Thee or put any negative charge on Thy grace to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 3:27-28

THE LAW OF FAITH

Why are those here, now so silent about themselves? What has happened to shut the mouths of those who had once spoken so openly about all the things they do for others and to please God? Why are they no longer telling about their religious activities, their church attendance, their time spent praying and trying to do the best they can?

They have learned there is a rule that applies to all men and women of all nations and creeds and classes. That is the rule of faith! This "law," this principle of faith is not based on works at all but on faith in a Person and a work that He alone has accomplished on our behalf. That Person is the Lord Jesus Christ and that work is the redemption that He provided and paid for in full. When He gave His life and shed His blood on the cross, that was for our sins that He might bring us to God. Now God justifies those who believe in Jesus.

Now all you hear from them is the sound of grateful hearts speaking of the grace of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and sounds of singing hearts expressing the truth of the Gospel message. You may hear voices not only praising God, but thanking Him personally and directly, not going through forms and rituals. Grace has reached them and faith has turned them to Christ alone for redemption. The law of faith is at work in their lives.

These people are not limited to a special day or special way to exercise the law of faith. Now those who have been justified live by faith. They are reckoned "just" because the Righteous Judge has declared this to be a fact. Now the just "live" by faith. The whole of their lives, their daily activities, their worship, their service - everything is by faith. These who are announced to be righteous, live by "faith." They are not looking for proof of acceptance with God by what they have done. They know this is a fact because they "know in who they have believed."

The law of faith eliminates pride in our efforts to reach and please God. It cancels out any comparison with other people that would exalt one's self. This rule applies to me personally and directs me to the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The rule of faith exalts and honors God alone for what His grace has provided and the work He has done for us. In no way does it raise up a person so any boasting can be done. "Boasting excluded, pride I abase. I'm only a sinner, saved by grace."

Faith faces the fact, and admits, "I cannot keep the old law and measure up to God's standard of righteousness. I need God to save me." This is because our relationship with God is established by faith and not our performance for God. Therefore, any boasting is excluded when the law of faith, the Gospel and its message, was brought in.

The reason is given as to why boasting is not accepted but is totally excluded: a person is announced or declared righteous by faith. There is nothing that can be added to that. "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Why this blessed quietness when God's people come together?
No one is boasting of anything as they praise their heavenly Father.
Words of worship, hymns of praise and testimonies given,
Speak only of God's grace and love - His mercy that came from heaven,
To this sinful earth of failing people, who no matter what they do,
Can make themselves clean and acceptable that they may be able to
Come to God and make a boast or even some simple claim,
That they belong in His heavenly kingdom by their own or some other person's name.

There is no name under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.
Justified by faith in Christ alone when on Calvary's cross He gave -
His life as a ransom for our sins and for us He did die,
That we through faith in Him alone, can to the Holy God draw nigh.
Now He makes it possible for us to know that God has accepted us;
Not boasting of works we have done or in ourselves do we trust -
But in Christ alone so the law of faith, that principle that God accepts -
Works for the grateful one who lives by faith and the works of the flesh rejects.

The rule of faith initiated new life and so now by faith we live
With grateful hearts and words of gratitude, in Christ we live and breathe
The air of heaven on earth as we take our journey through this land.
And daily blessings of life and peace are given us from God's faithful hand,

So, the life we live in the flesh right now, we live by faith in the Son of God.
That faith is increased and we are clearly guided as we read and meditate on His Word.
Beside that the Spirit of God within us applies to us that law of faith -
In every situation in life we meet and when all of life's problems we face.

As years advance and we start looking ahead far more than we look back;
We are perhaps more thankful for His grace and blessings, then on things that we think we
lack.

Life and its physical possessions lose their appeal as the years go by.
And instead of focusing our attention on earth, we are looking more toward the sky -
Because the law of faith, that principle of life, makes real to us the promises God made.
The promise of Christ's return makes us think more often of what is ahead.
We do not boast of anything we might think we have or have not done.
Our faith is in the cross-work, and the eternal life given us by God's Son.

**"May faith looks up to Thee, Father God, and I anticipate being able to see Thee work
in my life today those things that will please Thee. Whether it is in these words, or in
some work done, or truths passed on to others - may this day be lived in faith that
will glorify Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

ROMANS 3:29-31

THE LAW ESTABLISHED

There must have been Jews in the church at Rome who were thinking that being justified by faith wiped out everything Judaism taught. Does it cancel out the scriptures of the Old Testament? Does it mean the customs and practices of the Jews were of no value? Is God no longer working through Jews as a people? This question asked at the beginning of this chapter is answered. When we understand the truth that God in grace has provided salvation for Jews and Gentiles by Himself, and we are declared righteous by faith in Christ, then we "establish" the law.

God is One in His being to all people and is the same toward all people. Jews are justified by faith even though they have not kept the law of Moses. Gentiles are justified by their faith even though they didn't have the law. The commands of God written in the law were not established by the efforts of men to keep them. They were established by executing the penalty the law demanded. Attempts to adjust the demands of the law to a lower standard were exposed by the Lord Jesus when He explained what the demands of the law really meant. The shallow view of sin that people attach to it, and even the shallow ideas people have about God Himself, does not change God's view of the standard.

The attempts to meet the demands of righteousness by the law only exposes how ungodly we really are. Struggles to do better only reveal our inability to commend ourselves to God. When a sincere and honest person admits they are a failure in making him or herself righteous before God, then they can understand that God deals with us on the principle of faith - faith in the redeeming work of Christ alone. God justifies the ungodly who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ because Christ was crucified for us. Christ died for our sins. He tasted death for every man. He was made a curse for us, that we might be made righteous before God in Him. His death for sin established the law by having sin's penalty executed upon Him.

Therefore, in no way have the demands of the law been overlooked. They have been solidly established because all the demands against the sinner have been executed to the full extent of the law. We are not justified by any works we do to make ourselves acceptable to God. God justifies us because of the fact that Christ shed His blood and gave His life for me. He has finished the work of satisfying the Righteous God by His death, burial and resurrection on my behalf. Now God doesn't see me as one who is trying to be righteous by my own efforts. God only sees me in the dead, buried and risen Savior. He can show His divine favor and blessing toward me because I am accepted in Christ. That acceptance is eternal. I have been given eternal life - His own kind of life.

So now I know that Christ is in heaven for me and I am accepted in Him because of His finished work of satisfying all of God's claims against me. God sees me in Christ. Also, the Holy Spirit is in me to reveal Christ to me, to guide me into the truth that I might obey God. I pray in the Spirit; I walk by the Spirit and the Spirit opens the scriptures to me and my heart to love saints and sinners as well as loving God. God sees the Spirit in me. This whole act of justifying me is done by God. He justifies me as a sinner, not as a saint. My works don't make it happen or add anything to it, and my failures even as a Christian, does not take it away, or even decrease its value in any way. It is God that justifies - and establishes the law.

These who gather here in the presence of the Lord -
What claim can they possibly have that makes them welcome here?

They have received assurance from the pages of God's Word -
They have been justified by faith and their past is completely clear.

The law of ancient Israel condemned us every one -
How can they get around the fact that everyone has sinned?
A remarkable work has been completed when God laid upon His Son -
Their sins and through Him and with Him they died and rose again.

But the efforts of our culture, our striving to be accepted -
Don't these count for anything, are they not added to the price?
The works of man fall far short of God, He knows we've all neglected -
To fulfill righteousness that is demanded, so sin is never paid for twice.

On what basis then can I ever be accepted by God -
For every single day I live, I sin in word and deed?
The righteousness of Christ is pure, and by His death He established the law -
For it was executed in its fullness when He for us did bleed.

The works we do and our sincerity won't establish for us a way -
That God can look upon us and declare us justified?
No, the way the law is established is there is a price to pay -
And when the laws are fully executed, the guilty one must die.

If Christ has died for me and borne away all my sins
And paid that penalty, am I then righteously counted to be free?
Yes, the blessings of forgiveness and the fact that we are justified by Him
Who God could look upon with favor - and so justify me.

"Lord God, my Father, I hope I have gotten these truths right and clearly defined in my mind. I am finding great joy in following this path of love and logic to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. His justifying work when He was the propitiation for me by His blood, is still, and always will be, the basis of my assurance and faith. I praise Thee and thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:1-3

ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD

Especially for those Jews who had counted on their pedigree and national identity to make them acceptable to God, the two most important men of Jewish history are used to illustrate being justified by faith. Abraham lived before the law was given to the Jews. But the scriptural record of his life showed he had nothing to boast of in himself. When he heard the voice of God in Ur, he believed God. When he left Haran for the journey to Canaan, he believed God. When God promised a nation to come from him that would bless all nations, he believed God. When he offered Isaac his son, he believed God. He failed at times because he was a man in the flesh, but he believed God.

None of the famous things he did were reasons for him to boast. If all those works, he did were causes for him to boast in for making him right before God, he would not have been justified before God. We can hold other great men and women in admiration because of their great works of charity, valor or widespread importance, but that does not justify them before God. Faith does not wipe out the teaching of the Old Testament, but it makes all the things that happened to Israel understandable. There was a reason behind all those events that are recorded. The greatest saint has no greater standing than the weakest one.

There is no merit in believing. Believing did not change Abraham's character or nature any more than it does any of us. When Abraham believed God, he had an attitude toward God that believed God would do what He promised. "Abraham believed God." The object of faith is what is important, not an act. Abraham was believing in a faithful God who cannot lie. He was believing God who keeps His promises.

Abraham was saved by faith. God's laws are not unimportant but it is impossible to be saved by simply obeying. Those laws have exposed our guilt and need but do not add to our righteous standing before God. When Abraham believed God, His faith was reckoned by God as righteousness. His faith didn't earn him righteousness. The Object of his faith did legally, as a Judge, reckon, or account that as righteousness because that reckoning is based on the work of Christ on the cross. This is like a court scene where a Judge makes His verdict on the basis of the sacrifice for sin that was made by the Lord Jesus Christ once for all.

We learn that no matter how great or small we are, when the Object of our faith is God alone, we are accepted by God on a legal standing. Christ has died for us. We are reckoned righteous because of faith in that Person. Our faith does not make us righteous whether it be great or small. When we believe God, we do the one thing we can do, without "doing" anything. God made the statement and fulfilled it. We believe in our heart that God has told us the truth. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

It is not obscure; it is a stated fact.
Righteousness is not granted because in faith we act,
But it is granted in a legal way when the Object is -
The Lord Jesus Christ, and the righteousness is His
That makes us whether we are great or small
Accepted in Him who extends His grace to all,
So that anyone who will believe in Him alone,
Will find they are reckoned justified by the Judge on the throne.

When the Judge makes His decision on a legal basis,
There is no way to change that because in some cases;
People have done more good and would like to boast,
Their righteous living has made them the most
Likely to be acceptable to God because of what they did,
And God would know about that because nothing is hid
From the eyes of Him with whom we have to do -
So surely all our good works will see us through.

But that idea some people have is not true at all.
Being justified by faith happens when from our heart we call
On the name of the Lord who alone can save us from our sin -
And by His righteous cross-work is able to bring us in
To the presence of this Righteous Judge, and on our behalf,
Announce that He was our propitiation from God's righteous wrath.
The Object of our faith makes us eternally secure -
And on the unchanging Rock of Ages, our faith will endure.

"All-seeing and All-knowing God, I dare not seek to hide anything from Thee. I know Your eyes are everywhere beholding the evil and the good. I am not going to try to recommend myself in any way but I want to say again, "I believe God" without question or hesitation. May the affairs of this day testify to that in some way because I am weak in myself. By the power of the Spirit of God, may I live by faith. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:3. *"For what saith the scripture? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.'"*

ABRAHAM.

He must have pleased Thee a lot, O God -
When he heard Thy voice saying leave this place.
In faith he took all he had - and Lot,
And went out, trusting Thee alone to set his pace.

And from then until now, those who live by faith -
Look to Abraham and the righteousness imputed -
To give us assurance that God, by grace -
Accepts us on the faith-base, not laws concluded.

We are people of promises, made by God who cannot lie -
Living by faith as we move day by day
To the place God assures us we will reach by and by
As we draw closer to the land of fadeless day.

Abraham's example as he obeyed God's Word,
Tells me to live by faith and not by law -
Simply trusting in the sure hope of the Lord -
I have learned by Abraham's faith, the father of us all.

"May I never underestimate, Father God, the value of the examples of those who have gone before. Whether it be the faith of an ancient man like Abraham, or of my own father, give me the desire and willingness to live as they did - even though I do not know what will happen between now and heaven. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:4-5

GRACE OR DEBT

Contrary to what most people would like to believe, the more a person labors to make themselves righteous before God, the greater is the debt they owe. The works they do are not done according to the grace of God, but according to the debt they owe. How many works does it take to pay off the sins that deserve death? There is no laborious efforts that all men put together could do that would cancel that debt, because that all have sinned and all are sinners by nature. No one ever got righteousness because of their worth or their works. One must stop trying to be righteous before God by what he does.

The person who tries to pray themselves into favor with God, must not trust in prayers to make him or her acceptable to God. What God wants to hear from the contrite sinner is, "God be merciful to me the sinner." God will justify the ungodly when they truly mean this. Another may set about to do great acts of penance to make themselves righteous, but salvation is by grace alone, "Not of works least any man should boast." One may count on church membership as a work that would earn favor of God, but it is the ungodly who God justifies.

People make distinctions between sinners. Some will say, "I know I am a sinner, but basically I am a good person." Others compare themselves to others and say, "I know I am not perfect, but I am better than them." It is essential that everyone, no matter who they are or what they have done - good or bad, acknowledge the truth that they are ungodly. Everyone who is convinced of the fact they are a sinner before God, are lost by nature and practice, and are helpless to do anything to change that terrible state, will find no problem understanding and admitting, they are ungodly. When we grasp that fact, we are in a place where we can be justified by God.

When such an admission of being ungodly comes from within the heart and soul of the repentant sinner, then one's faith is willingly and heartily placed on the Person of Christ and the blood that He shed for ungodly sinners. The precious blood of Christ is that which puts away sin, and it is on that foundation God can declare righteous the one who believes on Jesus. He can justify the ungodly - not the "godly." We are all ungodly whether we like to admit it or not. It is not the born-again person God justifies - it is the ungodly. It is not the praying person God declares righteous - it is the ungodly. It is not the faithful church-attende God declares righteous - it is the ungodly.

If a person has not come as an ungodly one to trust Christ alone for salvation - that person is not justified, has not been declared righteous. God only declares righteous the ungodly who believe on Him. So the "working" way in verse four is contrasted with the "believing" method in verse five. There is no room for boasting when it comes to salvation. Works and grace do not mix. When a person stops working for divine favor, and hears the message of the Gospel that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again and finished the work of redemption by paying the ransom price for sin with His own blood on the cross, he can rest there. He knows He is a sinner and is ungodly. He comes to Christ just as he is. He is received through Christ and God justifies him just as he is. God's Word assures him or her that they are welcomed into His family. There is no boasting - only thankfulness from a grateful heart.

There are so many people trying to be just in their own way.
For some reason they won't stop to consider what God Himself does say.
If they would take the time to trace salvation to its Source,
They would understand from the Word that to be justified there is a course.

God had to find a perfect man to be our acceptable substitute.
And the path to the place of death had to follow a defined route.
So, from Bethlehem to Calvary, the Savior followed that path;
That by virtue of showing His sinlessness He could bear God's righteous wrath.

That was done completely, there is nothing more we can do.
God was satisfied with what Christ did and expects us to be so too.
To try to add by our own works to what the Lord has done,
Would be an insult to the Father who gave for us His Son.

The more we try to justify ourselves the greater is our debt.
Sin-stained works of whatever kind implies there are some sins God did forget,
When He laid on His Lamb He provided, to bear all our sins away;
Or else there were some costs Christ was unable by His death to pay.

That very attitude would incur a righteous wrath more fierce.

It implies a doubt that the cleansing blood when Christ's side was pierced -
Was sufficient to meet the demands of God's own righteousness,
And if that is the case our own salvation completely depends on us.

We know that idea cannot be true because every day we fail -
To meet the standard of perfection and all that righteousness entails.
In grace God has fully provided everything that we did need
Christ justifies the ungodly sinner when to God's Word he heeds.

God justifies the ungodly, not those who think they are fine.
All the encumbrances of works that around one's life entwines -
Cannot begin to declare one righteous, that is something God does do.
The faith of the ungodly in the work of Christ is what makes it good to me and you.

"Father in heaven, the holiness of God seems unreal to sinful man. For some reason blinded people can't grasp the necessity and value of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. O God, please help all that declare Thy Word today in fellowship with Thee, to make the truth of justification plain to the hearers. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:6-8

DAVID'S DESCRIPTION

A man who experienced God's grace in dealings with him gave testimony as to the great blessing of being justified apart from works. His history has great "highs" of victory when God used him and empowered him by the Holy Spirit to bring blessing to the nation of Israel. The works he accomplished were many and mighty. There were also great "lows" of the deepest and darkest kind that had to be faced. Did the good works of David outweigh the sins of adultery, hypocrisy, deceit and murder? David knew he was hopelessly lost apart from God's willingness to "justify him freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

He knew the joy of forgiveness. We can too when we no longer deny our guilt and are willing to admit our sin. This happens when one repents to God, admits that guilt to God and accepts the fact that "Christ was manifested to put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself." This is a fact that becomes real to us when we trust that God does what He says when He justifies the ungodly.

When iniquities are forgiven, this is more than just setting the guilty one free. The One who forgives reaches out the arms of acceptance and welcomes the sinner home, and places that one as a child in the family - in this case the family of God. Oh, the blessedness of forgiveness and the blessedness of one who has been forgiven.

To covering of his sins by the sacrifice of animals removed from sight the sins that David was so conscious of. They were out of God's sight in mercy until Christ came and put them away forever. He knew the blessing, the cause for great relief, that was his because of the blood of the atoning sacrifice. How much more do we have because the Lamb of God has come and borne away the sin of the world. Our sins have been taken away by the blood of His cross. So we can rejoice at the blessedness of sin having been taken away once for all, removed as far as the east is from the west. They are covered by seven miles of deep water in "the depths of the sea" and are "remembered no more forever."

More than being forgiven, and more than having our sins put away, is the great blessing that God will not bring up our sins again. Other believers besides me have sinned deeply, have been forgiven, have had their sins put away and their sins have not been accounted against them. This does not mean there are no consequences for sins committed by believers, but they are not counted against his standing in Christ. He has been counted justified in Christ.

People in the world often point to David's sin in taking Bathsheba, and charged God with being unfair and inconsistent. The people of the world do not like grace. They don't find a lot of difficulty in David taking another man's wife because many in the world do this. But because a believer does that and God does not reckon that sin as damning him, and for God to freely forgive a person like David, makes them angry against a God of grace. The self-righteous, sin-practicing, blind, unrepentant world does not like this at all. They judge their neighbors and reject grace because it shows up the deep-seated evil of their own hearts. They think God should judge a person by their works only. For David to be a man after God's own heart, defies the law-keeper's opinions. Whenever a forgiven, accepted-in-Christ, God-justified person lives in the world, he or she can expect a certain resentment and even opposition to that person being reckoned righteous by God's grace alone.

There are righteous claims against us that we cannot avoid.
The consequences of sin are such that a full price must be paid.
Blessings have come to us because the Righteous God has laid -
On Christ the iniquity of us all.

Now God can look upon us and accept us with divine favor.
He is not demanding our best works or our untiring labor.
Our blessedness does not come from our most earnest endeavor -
But from Him who died on the tree.

Our iniquities were many but we now have been forgiven.
Not by some whim of man's ideas but by the God of heaven,
On the basis of Christ's death for us is this matchless grace given -
And we are justified freely by His grace.

Sins were covered in the past by the blood of the atonement.
A temporary "passing over" was done by God's divine agreement.
Now by God's grace and Christ's death, there is a new covenant -
That has taken all our sins away.

We are blessed indeed because the Righteous God has seen,
The Savior standing in the place where the condemned sinner has been.
Now in Christ Jesus the sinner is accepted and he's reckoned clean -
Cleansed wholly by the blood of the Lamb.

God will not impute nor reckon to us again our sin.
He reckons us dead in Christ, and now we're alive in Him.
And because we are in Christ, He will not reckon them -
Against us because their price has been paid.

"What blessedness I am experiencing this morning, Oh Gracious Father, because of these wonderful words from the Old Testament that are repeated in the New. My sins are not reckoned against me because of Thy great grace and the sacrifice of Christ for me on the cross. How I praise Thee and thank Thee for this marvel of eternal acceptance and freedom in Christ. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:9-12

WITHOUT ORDINANCES

The truth is made plain, righteousness before God is without human works. They are completely set aside as the basis of being declared righteous. The truth is also that being justified is apart from divine ordinances. The Jews had the ordinance of circumcision that many of them blindly trusted in to make them acceptable before a Righteous God. Today many people trust in the ordinance of baptism to make themselves righteous before God. They say the baptism of infants at eight days (or whatever they decide) is the New Testament counterpart of the circumcision of Jewish boys in the Old Testament. Paul, by the Holy Spirit, carefully explains that being justified by God is by faith only, apart from keeping the law and apart from the ordinances that God gave. Those ordinances were to be an outward sign of an inward work. Neither baptism or the Lord's Supper have power to give us righteous standing before a holy God. Outward signs and seals demonstrate inward belief and trust. Our faith is in Christ and on His saving work for us, not on what we do.

The Gospel message does not tell people to clean up their lives, change their religion and after everything is in order in their lives, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. God justifies the ungodly when he or she believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then as public evidence of what has happened, the believer is identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection by the ordinance of baptism by immersion as a true believer. Abraham believed God long before he was circumcised at 99 years of age. He believed God when he was in Ur of the Chaldees and turned to God from idols. He believed God when he obeyed the command to leave his country, relatives and his father's house. He believed God when he built an altar to worship the Lord in Canaan. He believed God when he separated from Lot. He believed God when he was victorious over the kings. He believed God when he learned through Melchizedek more about God as the "God most high, Possessor of heaven and earth," and rejected the offer of great riches from men. He believed God concerning the promise of seed that would bless the whole world and was because of that counted righteous. All of these acts of faith were before the sign of circumcision. These acts of trusting God to do the impossible was evidence of his faith in God doing what He said before it ever happened.

Abraham's faith was a living walk with God trusting Him to do what He said. His works proved the reality of his faith. Works are the results of true faith, not a condition of salvation. God declares a person righteous because the focus of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ only and what He did to save us. God's great grace to us motivates us to "walk in light as He is in the light." That light of life is why the person who is declared by God to be righteous is so desirous to live the separated life of one who believes in Jesus.

Abraham's life of faith was his response to the love of God to him. He walked with God, learned more and more about God as he experienced God with him. He built altars to God and worshipped Him calling upon His name. Then the mark of separation set him apart from all others. To him, and to us, the blessing of righteousness before God comes without ordinances. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." Heart-belief is the true circumcision. Righteousness is apart from ordinances, and righteousness is apart from the works of men.

That fine young man with his beautiful wife -
Why are they going away?
God had called them from idols to a new life -
When he listened to what God had to say.
So, his success isn't in living a life of ease -
In the place he has always been.
Now he is motivated his Lord to please -
His life and walk are now with Him.

But he is leaving his home and his family -
How can this change be right?
God has given him a little sight of eternity -
Now he walks by faith not by sight.
It may be hard to rationalize -
To the satisfaction of those who look on -
Why we leave and forsake what so many prize
When all the passing things of life are gone.

When separations come from our earthly ambition -
Many will not understand.
The whole principle of faith and of consecration -
Means we must hold out an empty hand -
And receive what God gives to those who walk by faith,
Trusting God alone to meet our need.
We have found that from His store of abundant grace -
God maintains those who God's will do heed.

There is much about God we can learn, but only
When as people of faith we listen to Him.
He is perfect in righteousness and call us to be holy
Not giving in to the temptation to sin.
The riches of earth are for such a short time -
And then they are gone forever.
In a life of faith, we live in another clime -
Where God gives honor to each endeavor.

Ordinances of which men partake, decisions they choose
Are to be done under the guidance of God.
To go our own way and do it - we lose
What God has promised in His Word.
Righteousness with Him is not a small thing.
It begins when in faith we prove,
God will be glorified in the spiritual fruit we bring -
In the life of faith, we have nothing to lose.

"Father God, for the blessing of being declared righteous by Thee; for being justified freely by Thy grace apart from works and ordinances; for being allowed to walk in the freedom of forgiveness and acceptance; for being privileged to be identified with Christ in baptism and the privilege of being a partaker of the Lord's Supper - I give Thee thanks and praise in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:13-17

THE PROMISE

A wonderful blessing has been brought to us that came first as a promise to Abraham. "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." This is not because of the wonderful works Abraham did in the past, nor was it because he was a faithful law-keeper. He is called the "father of the faithful" because he believed God and acted accordingly. There was no effort on his part to earn the blessing of God's promises. His righteousness was the righteousness of faith. All of his life was lived before the law was given to Moses.

By repeating this whole teaching of righteousness by faith, the Spirit of God serves to emphasize the truth that this imparted righteousness is according to grace so it may be known by all. The faith that saves us has been, and still is, being exercised by all those who have trusted in Him who is "The Heir of all the world." Abraham was implied figuratively as the one who would bring blessing because of his faith. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Seed of Promise, will personally and actually bring blessing to the whole world. Those who will come into the good of this are those people of faith who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone apart from the works of the law. Faith in Christ is not mixed with works or merits of man. Abraham believed this promise that included us all.

Abraham was the father of the household of faith. Those who bring the Gospel to win souls to the Savior are called "fathers" also because people were "begat through the Gospel." God is the actual Father who brought life to us by the Holy Spirit through His Word. God makes us alive from the dead and gives us being. He makes life where there was no life. For God to bring something or someone into being, is a work of His own doing apart from anything we have done or might yet do.

There is a wonderful work going on unseen,
And it's going on all over the world.
People are coming by God's grace to Him,
In spite of the turmoil that around us swirls.
By faith in the living Word of God that leads
Them to put their personal faith in Christ,
Many are pressing into God's family when they heed
His Word and through them God is shedding His light.

One by one they are coming personally to believe
In the Lord Jesus who paid the ransom for sin.
Like Abraham of old, they are willing to receive
The fact that in love He gave Himself for them.
Apart from the works of righteousness done
Or any efforts to make themselves more right;
They rejoice that the punishment for their sin is gone,
And even in this dark world the light of life shines bright.

We are not the first and are not the last
Who will put our trust entirely in Him.
Abraham did that away back in the past,
And there have been many people of faith since then.
They know their weakness and inability
To earn their own personal salvation.
Willingly they acknowledge their unsuitability
Without faith alone to experience justification.

God gave His promise to Abraham in the past
That all nations through his seed would be blessed.
In real life experiences the testimony would last,
His faith in many ways God would test.
So we too, live by faith and we too trust
That what God has promised, He is going to do.
In all nations of earth where God's people are thrust,
They are confident He will bring them safely through.

"Father God, I know I have missed some of these private times because of traveling across the country. I am certainly glad to have them back even for this short time between traveling days. May these meditations be acceptable to Thee I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:19-24

STRONG IN FAITH

He was strong in faith when with no one else around of like mind, he stepped out alone in faith in God. The world had gone away from God to their idols and set up stone and wood gods. They made their sacrifices to

demons and in self-degradation were without God and without hope in the world. It was there in Ur the God of glory first appeared to Abraham. Again, God revealed Himself as Jehovah although Abraham didn't know the meaning of that name. A third time, God Most High, El Elyon appeared to him as the "Possessor of heaven and earth," and the One over nations and kings. The fourth time He revealed Himself as Lord, Adonai-Jehovah; the fifth time as El Shaddai, the Almighty God; the sixth time as the Everlasting God and the seventh time as the God who will provide, Jehovah-Jireh. This man of faith knew his God and from the beginning of his life of faith, "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

He knew his own condition as a man, and he knew the condition and place in life of Sarah. He also knew his God and because he was strengthened in his faith, he gave God glory without doubting God's promise. When one is sure that God has given His promise regarding a matter, we can rest in confidence that it will be done. God reckons such faith as righteousness. Abraham was not reckoned righteous because he left Ur of the Chaldees, or built altars, or was victorious in battle. He was reckoned righteous when he believed the promise of blessing to the nations would come through his "seed," - through the Lord Jesus Christ. It was then he rejoiced to see Christ and believed the promise of God. By nature he was as good as dead, but by faith he believed blessing would come to the world through Christ.

This same principle of faith that does not waver holds good for us today. Lot, Abraham's nephew, walked by sight and as far as his testimony was concerned, he was of the world even though he was saved. Our faith will be reckoned (considered to be so) to be righteous and counted as righteousness by God when faith is living and strong - and placed in God alone. We who believe that God is satisfied with what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us when He was made the propitiation for our sins, we, like Abraham are reckoned as righteous. Abraham's faith was tested and we too should expect to be tested. "The trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perisheth."

It is God in whom we have put our faith. We believe God because He is God. Nothing we are or do has anything to do with our being counted righteous. But our faith is in Him because He has raised our Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead. He has been raised. That is a fact. He has been seen by many. That is a fact. He has been received up into glory. That is a fact.

The Holy Spirit has come and empowered the people of God so that they are truly strong in faith. Now our placing is in the Risen Christ in whom we are set by God. We have been justified from all things by His blood. Our faith is placed in a Sure Person, based on a finished work, that secures us a privileged position in which we find ourselves accepted in the Beloved. This glorious fact binds our hearts to Him in spite of the trials of faith that enable us to be strengthened in Him.

By nature, we are weak - by faith we are strong.
By faith we can stand, when all around us is wrong.
What seems impossible to men, is assured to us by faith.
Looking back, we see God working in this path of life we trace.

When God makes a promise, we know it will come to pass.
By being strengthened in our faith, as long as the trial shall last
We know that God has a purpose if it is for one year or ten -
And when we can look back, we will understand it then.

The things that happen in life will all someday make sense.
Faith wouldn't be a part of life if we knew why things are sent.
God has His reasons for withholding or giving as He sees.
Our faith becomes reality when it is God's promises that we seize.

It is not just on rare occasions that God wants us to live by faith.
When there is a need that arises, we have to trust in the God of grace.
Sometimes the need is met, other times there is no relief -
But God's grace is sufficient for us; ours is simply to believe.

A wonderful blessing results from things we may not understand.
God counts our faith as righteousness when we grasp what He does hand.
The reason we may not know; the end results may be obscure -
The point of being strong in faith, is through testing we learn to endure.

I know in whom I have believed, He forever remains the same.
When times of trial come, I know there is power in Jesus' name.
So, I will seek to learn the lessons, and take it to God in prayer.
Even though the reasons I may never know, by faith I will leave it there.

"My Gracious Father, I thank Thee for trusting me with holy things. My prayer is that I will be able to discharge the message of Thy truth in a way that is understood and that it will make a difference in the lives of those who hear. May I be a living testimony of what I speak. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 4:24-25. *"But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."*

ABRAHAM THE EXAMPLE.

He heard God say, "Go from this place; from country, kin and home."
So Abram left by faith alone in what the Lord told him;
The journey long before him lay, to the promised land he came;
His faith was as strong at the journey's end, as it was when he first began.

It was God he believed, not some foolish whim, made him leave all he had known.
The city of God with foundations strong, was where he now belonged.
For the rest of his life he looked ahead, following the road that God had shown.
His confidence grew the more he knew, of the God he knew him called.

That act of faith at the first call made, was counted by God to him;
As a righteous act based on the fact that to not act in faith is sin.
Righteousness imputed is not by works, but faith when the word is given;
God will grant what man can't do, when we obey the word from heaven.

The kind of faith that pleases God, means that He knows we do trust
What He says is best, and we will rest, on what he knows is best for us.
Like Abraham, who left his land, for the place God could there him bless;
So here and now, where we are found, to live by faith is best.

We were justified, by grace when God, sent His Son to die in our place;
And believing Him, who bore our sin, justifies each one of us by faith.
When Christ was raised, by the power of God, we too in Him were raised;
So, by the grace He gives, the life we live, gives to Jesus all the praise.

"O God, my gracious Father: I am thinking at this moment of the importance of being justified and made accepted in Christ. I know I have spoken to Thee before about this, but as I think of bringing thoughts and acts of worship to Thee, it is with grateful appreciation that I thank Thee for such acceptance. I am not an intruder; I am a son. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

ROMANS 4:25

DELIVERED --- RAISED

There is something I understand but must remind myself of from time to time. God does not clean up the old man and declare me righteous. When the Lord Jesus Christ was "delivered for our offenses," those trespasses that condemned me were laid upon Him. He bore my sin with its penalty and the guilt that accompanies sin, both legally and personally. The Righteous, Holy God delivered up our Lord that we might be justified from all things by His blood. Now we are placed by God in the Risen Christ.

In view of our justifying, the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. It is when we believe on Him, we are justified. His resurrection is not to prove that we have been justified, but to actually justify us in the Risen Christ. The act of resurrection was the fact making possible our justification. We were justified as ungodly sinners and are now a new creation in Christ. We are not righteous because we are new creatures in Christ but because the ungodly are justified in Christ. If our sins had been placed on Christ as my Substitute and He had not been raised from the dead, where would I be? God tells us our sins have been put away by the blood of Christ so we are justified from all things. Christ has been raised and so our standing in Him is our place. We are now in Him and will be with Him forever. Being justified is not being born again; it is not a change of heart; it is not an unjust man being made just; and it is not our sanctification. It is a declaration of God that a person is righteous in God's sight on the basis of redemption in Christ Jesus. God pronounced the whole world guilty before Him. Now He can legally pronounce one who puts his or her faith unreservedly in Christ and His sacrifice - justified. And He connects this believing sinner with the Risen Christ so the believer is made "the righteousness of God in Him" - forever!

Much more than I can grasp, but it is true just the same,
Is that I am pronounced righteous by the authority of Jesus' name.
He was delivered by God, to on the cross there take my place.

And it is in the sacrifice of Christ alone I have personally put my faith.
God is satisfied legally and in every other way,
To justify me completely so there is nothing to pay.
This ungodly sinner He has justified, and now makes the declaration
That I am free from sin's punishment and guilt - there is now no condemnation.

The payment of Christ's blood was the cost of justification.
Now the ungodly is cleared of all guilt and granted freely salvation.
When Christ rose from among the dead, His resurrection justified.
Life is in Christ and I live, because He lives now who for me has died.
The resurrection isn't just a proof, but is the transforming act,
That makes our justification such a defining fact.
Not dead but risen is the Christ who by Himself put away sin -
And now I am cleared of all charges and have eternal life in Him.

No charges can be laid by Satan or men
That there is something more to be done or to do again.
Redemption is complete and now justification is too.
There is nothing that can be taken away or even added thereto.
My standing in Christ is an eternal position -
That does not change depending on my condition.
Because of such grace the motivation is strong
To please God in whatever way I can and eschew that which is wrong.

"Father in heaven, may I be able in some way tonight in the believers' meeting pass on to Thy people some of what it means to me to be justified. There generally is great appreciation for salvation and its accompanying blessings, but there is a tendency to overlook the importance and impact of being justified. May we all get a good look at that tonight. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 5:1. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"*

THROUGH HIM.

We have peace, v.1

The war is over, the papers are signed, the tension is over, the distance is bridged – "He made peace through the blood of His cross." The enmity that we had against God is gone now, and instead of guilt, there is peace. Usually the first effect of justification is peace – peace with God. The soul is calmed, the conscience is cleared, the mind is cleansed. The new believer senses a conscious relief, and often will let out a sigh as the fact of being accepted by God becomes real.

We have access, v.2

The distance between us and God is gone. A sense of nearness and affection comes alive in the new creation. A freshness of appreciation of the Person and work of Christ returns again and again as we consider Him. We draw near to God with assurance and yet awe. We recognize His holiness and at the same time we know we are welcomed. Our inner thoughts are directed toward Him who has redeemed us and our smile of joy is directed towards Him who welcomes us as His children.

We have salvation from wrath, v.9

The terrors of a broken law and of a righteous God are gone. We know they are still in place but no longer are we afraid, for "Christ died for the ungodly... Christ died for us."
The condemnation looking back because we were ungodly in *conduct*; has been removed with the knowledge of the price paid in full. The concern because of the fact of being a sinner in our *condition* no longer makes the conscience guilty. The claim of forgiveness is not unfounded as we are no longer enemies in our *character*.

We have been reconciled, v.11

Through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ we have received the atonement (reconciliation) that we so greatly needed. The act of reconciliation is a fact because "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." All barriers have been removed and we have access to God by the grace wherein we stand.

We are rejoicing, v.11

Our constant source of joy is our God. We see evidence of our acceptance on every hand as we remember, "we are accepted in the Beloved." What a thrill the name and Person of our Lord Jesus Christ gives to us. We love Him and we are loved by Him. There is a mutual sense of rejoicing as we joy in God.

“What wonderful and bounteous blessings have come to me Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. I am so satisfied with Thee, Lord Jesus. I just want to praise and thank Thee now, for all I have in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 5:1-2

PEACE WITH GOD

The results of being declared righteous (justified) on the principle of faith begins with this wonderful statement, "peace with God." This does not have to do with our feelings of calmness or of tranquility. This is reconciliation between the Almighty God and rebellious, sinful subjects. We were made by God and for Him but sin had made us dead to God. Now we look back to the fact that we have been declared righteous by God who is eternally the same. This doesn't have to do with the state of our Christian life. This does mean that there is no more hostility between us because our sin has been fully judged and God is completely satisfied with the sacrifice Christ made for us on the cross. God will not charge us again for sin, and Christ will never have to suffer for sin again. There is nothing now blocking our relationship with God.

There has been "peace made by the blood of His cross," and our standing is in grace without qualifications being added to that. This place of highest privilege is close to God Himself. We are not enemies or aliens, but friends and "children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." At the coming of Christ, we will see Him glorified in all the glory of God, and we will be glorified together with Him.

Faith, hope and love are basic to the Christian life. Our relationship with God begins with faith. This makes us aware that we are delivered from the consequences of sin and the past by the death of Christ as our Substitute. Hope looks ahead with confidence into the future and the fulfillment of the promises of God. This challenges and motivates us, as we learn what God has in His mind for us. The love of God has been poured into us and makes it possible for us to reach out and connect with others as the Holy Spirit guides us. These three are at the heart of the Christian life and peace with God makes this a reality to us.

Through Christ we have peace with God; we are justified by faith.
We also have access to Him always through Christ, because of our standing in grace.
There is joy and rejoicing in Christ and the great blessing of peace.
The conflict because of our sin against God, now finally and truly has ceased.

Our standing is permanent, we can't be more secure -
For our acceptance is in Him, not what we might endure.
The relief from the fear of the future motivates us to live alway -
Looking forward to seeing Christ glorified in a coming day.

Through Christ we have salvation from the wrath to come.
God will not charge us again with what He laid on His Son.
We have been saved from wrath, that is our permanent standing.
Being justified by His blood means there are no other claims demanding.

Peace is a fact between the saved sinner and God.
We have been reconciled to Him by the power of Christ's blood.
This fact is established and won't have to be brought up again.
Our access to God has been opened through Him.

Now we rejoice in God's glory and what we know is to come.
By faith we have come into this position by the authority of His name.
When we pray, He hears as we seek to honor our Lord.
When we read the scriptures, we learn of Him through the Word.

These blessings all together are some of the blessings of peace.
We can appreciate and enjoy them because of our standing in grace.
The glory of God sometimes seems before us to shine.
What a joy and contentment it is to know this peace is mine.

“Eternal God, my Gracious Father, for some reason this morning I am very conscious of being a man of eternity. There seems to be a real uplifting of my soul when I consider Thy glory, which shall be revealed, and which is already in my heart. I praise and honor Thee this morning. In His Name, Amen.”

ROMANS 5:3-5

UNUSUAL JOY

It is not out of the ordinary for believers to rejoice when God is honored and glorified. In fact, that is what we live for now and hope for as we look into the future. But to rejoice in suffering is not what we would consider a cause for joy. For the early believers, suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ was not the exception but was the normal rule. The future was bright but the present for them was beset with on-going difficulties that had to be overcome or endured.

To a lesser degree as far as physical suffering is concerned, we too are called upon to persevere in times of suffering. It is more likely that our most serious difficulties in the Christian life will be the pressure to conform to the moral, social and religious lifestyle of the world and be tempted by the materialism that abounds all around us, rather than by physical abuse and pain. These times are cause for rejoicing because our spiritual development increases during these difficult experiences. The tribulations that come challenges us to endurance in the midst of times of perplexity. Endurance in turn develops character which gives a sense of approval by God. This then brings the hope that does not make us ashamed because God's love is directed upon us with favor.

Each day we live will bring us some experiences that will test our patience. These will provide opportunities for our growth, leading us to maturity as the Holy Spirit works in us to further our spiritual development. God has designed a process that brings us, and keeps us, into a happy state of soul that is not dependent on smooth comfortable living and freedom from hard circumstances. The Holy Spirit within us spreads the love of God in our hearts as an inner witness that the God of love, and the love of God, is there in times of trial, testing and need. God's marvelous grace changes this potential weakness into a time of strength that builds our character, our trust in God and our confidence in the future.

Some of the choicest saints of God have done their greatest service for God when they are shut up to God alone. John Bunyan certainly did not waste his years of imprisonment in self-pity. The "Pilgrims Progress" and other of his writings have blessed God's people for generations. Imprisoned missionaries, believers in concentration camps and saints bound by the ravages of pain upon the bed have brought blessing to many and glory to God when God's strength was made perfect in their weakness. Adverse circumstances produce strong faith. Strong faith produces grace in the soul. Grace in the soul produces glory for God. Glory for God produces hope for the future. All of this produces an unusual joy in the suffering believer as well as the joy in the peace that has been made with God.

What are these songs that arise in the darkness,
That envelops those who lie in bondage and chains?
Where is the voice, the ones who will hearken,
As hearts break out in praise in spite of their pains?
These prayerful tunes of testimony, of glory, of praise -
Come from patient sufferers who have real hope in God.
Chained by the extremities but with free hearts they raise
Voices in testimony as to their trust in the Lord.

Sufferers all over this whole world have experienced
Times when God allows His loved ones to pass through
Pressures unrelenting with no hope of transference -
That the character of Christ in them will be proved to be true.
So, the process goes on until there comes a day
When God lifts the burden, and some lessons we have learned
Rising from the pressing suffering, we go another way,
And the treasure that follows is one that is earned.

The circumstances we thought were a punishing thing
Turned out to be opportunities God gave us to grow.
At the first we resisted all that the suffering did bring -
Now we have found out there were things we needed to know.
Looking back, we are made aware that we were like a child,
When we complained and asked God that these pressures be lifted.
From this perspective we see the benefits when we all did yield -
And God was glorified when through suffering we were sifted.

I hope I have learned that not all suffering is bad.
I would be as weak as water if everything was good.
The problems and tensions that tended to make me sad -
Have turned out to be blessings to make me what I should.
God has the right to send me what is needed -
He is looking for me to be conformed to the image of His Son.

I am wise when the lessons to which I have heeded -
Have matured me and molded me before they were done.

"Father God, this life I live seems to be fuller every day. Truths come into my mind unbidden and give me a joy as they are unfolded to me. Opportunities to serve Thee seem to be continually around me keeping me in a state of living faith. Thou hast given Linda and me health and strength and I praise and thank Thee for this. Please Father, help us to honor and glorify Thee in ways that are suitable to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 5:6-8

GOD'S LOVE FOR SINNERS

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all involved in our salvation. The Father loved us so much that He sent the Son to bring us to Him by the sacrifice He made for us on the cross. The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, righteousness and judgment; to reveal Christ to us through the Word and then to regenerate us and live in us in such a fullness that now, by the love of the Spirit, we live by His power.

By our nature we were helpless in our sins. Because of our sinfulness and moral weakness, we could do nothing to save ourselves. Christ came at exactly the right time in God's schedule of events to die for the ungodly. It was in no way an act precipitated by our demands or arranging, but in absolute grace for the ungodly - Christ died. That evidence of God's love was in no way brought about by any ability we had to do good. For a sternly righteous man, some, but not very many would give their lives for. Perhaps for a generous and noble person one knows and deeply cares for, some would die. But because of His love for the ungodly ones without strength, and even more, for those who chose to sin and go the wrong direction, God demonstrated His love when Christ died for us.

God did not give Christ to die for us because we were good enough, but because He loved us. Further, when we were enemies of God we were reconciled to God by the death of Christ. For the weak, strengthless ones; for those who were deliberately sinning ones; for those who were enemies - God gave His Son to die for us. This "commending" of His love is beyond our ability to explain. This love was not caused by anything in us or of us. This proof of love, this confirmation of absolute grace is beyond any stretch of self-righteousness, beyond our ability to reason a cause for. To try to find some way to pay for such love and grace would be an insult to God from whom these marvelous blessings come to us. To try to get God reconciled to us would be the heights of arrogance.

We were the ungodly in conduct in the past when Christ died for us. We are the sinners in our condition who God demonstrated His love to us. We were enemies in our character that affected our future when Christ died for us. It is arrogance on our part to try to get God to be reconciled to us through our prayers, works or consecration. We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. This happened when we were still enemies. I am able to accept this reconciliation, and I do accept this, when I trust the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. Now God accepts me and I am no longer an enemy but a friend - a son of His by His grace.

Once without strength to do what was right.
The conduct of sin left me in nature's night.
At just the right time Christ's death on the tree
Broke the bonds of sin and brought me liberty.

I was not one of the nobility; with some claim to fame.
The love and grace of God to me was not because of my name.
Sometimes people have given their lives for others -
Fellow warriors are willing to die for their band of brothers.

In spite of the fact that we are sinners by actions,
The demonstration of God's love has brought legal satisfaction,
Which dealt once and for all with the charges sin brought against us.
The full extent of righteous justice was met by Christ on the cross.

Even though we were enemies by character to God,
We have been reconciled to Him by the Savior's blood.
No longer enemies but brought as near as sons,
Accepted we are by what He has willingly done.

What love and grace we have been freely shown!
Such a demonstration of interest in us was never before known!
God's love to sinners has already taken place -
And we come into the good of this by His absolute grace.

Many souls have seen truth through this marvelous passage,
The truth and way of salvation when they heard this message.
This is not some trivial event or scene from the ancient past -
This is a work of a Gracious, Loving God that will forever last.

I live in the good of this reconciliation day by day.
The price for my helpless condition in sin He was willing to pay.
What greater message could there be than "Christ died for us!"
Why would I not in such a Gracious Person place all my trust!

"Father God, in this place of safety with the sounds of a hurricane all around, I find myself in a contented state of mind. Thy righteous justice has been satisfied on my account and I am loved by Thee without demands. My response Father, is help me to know in what ways I can best show my appreciation and love for Thee today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 5:9-11

MUCH MORE

The great cost of declaring us righteous by the shedding of the blood of Christ, the giving of life, has been accomplished. This is a work that has been done and nothing will nor ever can be added to it. Christ has died for us "while we were yet sinners." Now, "much more" will we as believers be saved from coming wrath through Christ. The coming judgment holds no fears for us because of the blood that has bought our redemption, is the basis of us being counted righteous.

God's "wrath" against sin is to be differentiated from how He looks upon sinners. God loved us even when we were in our sins. God's "wrath" against sin isn't to be regarded as if God is angry in the way we use the word. It was not punishment that is personal against the sinner, but righteous wrath against sin, that Christ endured. "The soul (sinner) that sinneth, it shall die," tells us we cannot come near to God, not because God hates us, but because God is holy. Christ died that we who were separated and forsaken under the wrath of God, would have One who could take the judgment and wrath of God for me.

The pain and suffering, the agonies of Christ, were not for each of our sins, but He laid down His life for us. That is far greater than the suffering of agony. He took the place of the sinner that we might be reconciled to God through Him. The sufferings Christ endured were great, but far more important is the One who suffered - the Great Sacrifice, who laid down His life in a deliberate act of God's will so that we could be brought to God. Now the coming "wrath" of judgment has no claim on us and should not affect our calmness and assurance, because we have been reconciled to God. That has already taken place.

"Now, "much more," or added to that great work of reconciling us to God by Christ's death, we are saved by His risen life. We will participate with, and share in, His risen life forever. When the judgment of God falls on this wicked world, we shall be saved by His risen life. Christ has met all the demands of God's holiness, His righteousness and His truth when He died. So we are saved now, and will be forever because He who satisfied God is risen and lives forevermore. We have been "delivered from the wrath to come."

Now even more that being saved from wrath because of Christ's death, justified by faith, and saved by the risen Lord, we "joy" (exalt) in God. Instead of our mouths being shut and we being found guilty before God, we are rejoicing in Him. He was our Judge before whom we were found condemned. Now we find our joy in the Lord Jesus Christ because He has accomplished reconciliation with God on our behalf. This is not just a temporary covering over of sin (atonement) but a complete reconciliation. We exalt and honor our Lord Jesus Christ who has done this great work. The Holy God is satisfied and His righteous wrath against sin has been dealt with completely and forever. The condemned sinner has been justified and reconciled to God. This is like a song of praise and glory to God that will be a song in our hearts throughout the ages to come. "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb." All the blessings of God have come to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

How is it possible to describe such blessing;
As being justified freely by Christ's blood?
Is there some possible way of addressing;
The supreme glories of God's love?

The wonderful word "saved" come to my mind
It is one that is inspired by God.
In that blessed word I continually find
A whole lot of important truths in one word.

Saved from sin because of the redemption paid
Brings joy to one who was under sin's guilt.
When the Lord upon the Lamb all our sins laid
No one else but the Righteous God felt
The great weight of the wrath when God did not spare
His only Son but delivered Him up for us all.
That blessed word "saved" means God really did care
For sinners who upon Him for mercy call.

We are saved from wrath that is yet to come -
Being saved is an on-going fact.
More than being rescued is that which has been done
Has a lasting and eternal impact.
Judgment that is coming has no claim on those
Who have been, by our Lord, to God reconciled.
Those who are reconciled really should know,
There is no wrath going to fall on God's beloved child.

Higher and higher that word "saved" still reaches.
For we have been also saved by Christ's life.
Through the risen Savior, God's Word teaches
We are raised with Him that we may walk in the light.
There is a joy in God that now we have,
With which no other joy can compare.
This new life in Christ that God graciously gave
Means with Christ this life forever we share.

"O Father in heaven; Thou hast surely given me joy here on earth today as I review these blessed truths of salvation, justification and reconciliation. If it would please Thee Father, I would like to pass this joy on to the Lord's people here tonight in the meeting. Maybe this joy could be contagious and would strengthen the saints. I ask this in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 5:12-14

THE REPRESENTATIVE

The results of being justified by faith connects us with the Risen Lord Jesus Christ and dealt with our sins in a legal and just way. Now in these verses a new view of our salvation is the teaching that is presented. This is not dealing with sins as the "transgression of the law," but goes back before the law was given to when God's definition of sin was the refusal to be controlled - self-will (anomia). The representative of all humanity, Adam, our federal head, was made guilty of sin by his act of self-will. So, by his act, as our representative, we acted. We didn't have to wait to be born to get a sinful nature. Death takes place even in the womb. The sin-principle that has passed upon all humanity is that same self-will, and the condemnation because of it is a fact - a fore-gone conclusion. This is a legal act because of mans' choice. We are not justified only because the sins we have committed are dealt with, and we are forgiven of breaking the law. There is a more basic fundamental problem that has to be dealt with.

Every physical death happens because of one man's sin. When he acted in self-will, all have come under the condemnation of that sin because Adam was our federal head (representative). That has happened and we have nothing to do about that. We cannot help being who we are and we cannot avoid physical death, unless those who are saved are caught to meet the Lord in the air at the Rapture. The death-principle is, all have sinned because of one man's act, not our own acts.

So why did people die when there was no written law? It is because we have been made by God with the ability to make decisions. Death comes because of Adam's sin. That is why infants die physically in their innocence. Sin is not imputed to them because they are innocent of the law, even of the inherent nature of self-will. There is, however, a working in their hearts and the conscience within will eventually accuse them or excuse them. When the law written in the heart is trampled on by self-will, there is laid on them the consequence of spiritual death. Physical death is the result of Adam's sin. Spiritual death is the result of our own sins even if they don't resemble the sin of Adam. Physical death reigned as king in sovereignty because of Adam's sin. Yet Adam is stated to be a type of the One who was to come.

Condemnation has come by one, Adam, and so physical death awaits us all. Justification by faith has come by the One and our spiritual life is dependent on Him who came "full of grace and truth." In this teaching of the two representatives we are able to understand the principle of sin that brought physical death to all. But we are also able to understand there was One who was to come and has come. Even Adam knew about Him. He would bring the truth of spiritual life to us when, as our representative Man, we would be raised with Him, and in Him we would be made alive. When one has been justified by faith in Christ, he or she is no longer connected with the first Adam in which we were born, but with Christ who lives forevermore. Because He lives, we live also. Adam is a pattern as the representative of all created humanity. The Lord Jesus Christ is the representative of the new spiritual humanity.

It happened in one act when he chose self-will.
The effects of Adam's choice remain with us still.
Every person born has the same sentence of death.
The results of that choice are on us till our very last breath.

But the physical act of death is not our greatest problem.
Every human born has this dark self-will in them.
We die because of one act on the part of one man.
We live because One Man, the great gulf of sin did span.

There is placed within all, the ability to choose.
Those who choose right win, and those choosing wrong loose.
There is no escaping the sentence of natural death.
But there is life eternal given to those who obey what God saith.

Death through Adam is totally beyond our control.
The privilege of choosing new life is given to every soul.
The blessing of eternal life comes to us as a gift.
Which we can receive personally by taking gratefully it.

We cannot do anything about the wages of sin.
That has passed on us and is on every one.
When we receive Christ as our personal Savior -
The blessing of spiritual life gives life a whole new savor.

Old Adam gave the savor of death to those dead.
Because as our representative he is our federal head.
The Lord Jesus Christ from heaven has opened a new door.
And the life we have from Him is life evermore.

It is futile to mourn over our natural state.
The life God gives us is so supremely great
That no matter what befalls us because of our humanity
What we have in Christ Jesus is good for eternity.

"O Holy God, it does seem most reasonable that when self-will has its way it separates us from Thee. It would be an awful state of affairs for us to be in conflict with Thee and Thy will forever. I thank Thee today for the Lord Jesus who did always those things that pleased Thee. I thank Thee that through Him coming to our aid, I find acceptance with Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 5:18. *"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life."*

THE FREE GIFT.

It seems to some the consequence that one sin brought on men,
Was far too great when death was made the price God did demand.
But to do what God specifically, says not to do, is grave;
It charges God with doing wrong; man, the last word, must have
Even though we have no power, to ever do what's right;
And God could justifiably cast us to darkest night.

But grace surmounts the highest wall man's sin could ever raise;
For God had planned redemption well, so He could, lost souls save.
When one man sinned, and brought on all the curse of our self-will;
One Other Man, by God's free grace, died once to save us all.
All mankind, without a hope was helplessly adrift;

But by His death, Christ paid sin's price, providing a free gift.

To claim that gift is each one's choice, to accept or turn away;
It is there for all who've been condemned, for Christ the price did pay.
To reject the gift means you are on your own, and under condemnation.
To receive the gift, and the Giver too, means the blessing of salvation.
It is grace and love beyond our ken, that is the real reason;
God justifies us now to live life new, we are able now to please Him.

Through endless days we will always praise, the Lord who we did buy.
The free gift came to us from Him; we are now to God brought nigh.
The judgment's passed forever now, the offence is no more charged
To our account, for we are cleansed; His righteousness is ours.
Grace now does reign, the debt is paid and we are free to live,
Through the righteousness of Him who loved and gave to us this gift.

"I am thankful Father, for this unspeakable, free gift. Life is able to be lived with the assurance that we will not be charged with the payment of our sins. Grace makes me want to live a righteous life. God forbid that I should ever take such a gift for granted. Amen."

ROMANS 5:15-19

ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

There is no question that because of Adam's trespass death has been passed on to all of the human race. The evidence is seen in our hospitals, funeral parlors and cemeteries. No one can avoid that appointment. So one man brought death. Because of that one man's act, judgment and condemnation not only came on him, but on all men because of that sinful nature and accompanying guilt we have inherited. By that one man's offense or trespass, death has reigned as king over every person in every part of the world. By the act of Adam's self-will and disobedience, every human being is born a sinner. Of that fact there is no doubt. There is nothing we can do to preserve our children from that sinful nature they have inherited through us.

But standing out in its gleaming glory against such a black background, is the "abundant grace" and the "gift of righteousness" in beautiful evidence in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Far greater in importance than the fact of our condemnation is the grace of God and the righteousness gifted to those who believe on the Lord Jesus because of that grace extended to us. From one sinful act, there came judgment on us all. But now, from one righteous act in which many trespasses were laid on Christ, there comes justification for all those who will receive that abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness.

When we receive the "abundance of grace" we experience the blessing of all the claims of God against us being met by Christ on the cross. Now God acts toward us in grace that abounds to sinners because of His inherent love. From His great heart of love comes this gracious kindness and we give Him honor and glory because of that abundance of grace.

The "gift of righteousness" that comes from God apart from any works of man, whether it be ordinances, attempts at law-keeping or any worth that we think we have, comes from God Himself. This is truly a gift of the greatest importance which we were so unworthy of. This opens up a whole new life of liberty to one who is experiencing the blessings of the abundance of grace. When we have received such a gift of righteousness and believe in the Person who gave it to us, we rejoice in that without fear of having it taken away or lost by some act we might do. No longer does death reign as king over the once condemned man. Now we reign as kings in life through the One who brought this abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to us - our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not have to wait for a future day because this day of righteousness has already begun for the children of God, the "children of the King." It is a fact that we are sons and daughters in the kingdom of God now, and we will be forever through the One who brought the free gift to us.

In the past we were condemned in Adam, our representative. Now, by the work of Christ on the cross, and the fact of this sinless Person justifying us by His blood, our present standing is in Jesus Christ. This standing is real because our federal head, our representative, is the Risen Christ. The penalty of sin was taken by Him in the past when He was on the cross. Our place now is in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Our history in Adam is now done with. As ungodly (Adam-condemned) sinners we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and at the cross our old history ended. "He was made sin for us." Now we are made righteous by God in Christ. We are in Christ and are accepted by God in Him.

In the past we were those who committed sins by the guilt of one man, Adam's disobedience. Now because of the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Father we are made righteous. This is not because He was obedient to the law. He was not under the authority of the law. The first Adam was not condemned by the law. There was no law. He was condemned because his self-will led him to be disobedient to God. The Lord Jesus was not under the law and neither were we. In our self-will we were disobedient to God. By the obedience of our Lord who is now our Risen Lord, we have been accepted by God because He is our righteousness.

In the past we were by one man's guilt condemned -
It was started by one, then affected us all.
Death has passed on all for all have sinned -
All humanity has a sinful nature from that fall.

But into the darkness of condemnation has come light.
The God of Love has given abundant grace.
Not only that, but the gift of righteousness that brings life
Has been presented to us to be received by personal faith.

Even though by Adam's sin we were far away
From God, for in our nature was strong self-will.
Yet now by God's abundance of grace this very day,
We reign as kings as our cup of blessing He daily fills.

That gift of righteousness is ours now and forever.
Eternal life because of that is our present possession.
Nothing can or ever will from our Lord Jesus sever
Those who have through that grace been given salvation.

There is joy in the soul when we stop to think
Of all the blessings the abundance of grace to us did bring.
We can stand firm in our Lord and never shrink
From the charges that we are still an unholy thing.

By the gift of righteousness and abundance of grace
We stand in Christ with assurance and no doubt,
That He who gave us the blessings, has provided a place,
Where we remain with joy in the soul that grace has brought about.

"Father, the day before us holds new things and new places. May my service for Thee today be in the full assurance that Thou hast brought me to this place for this time. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 5:20. *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."*

GRACE ABOUNDED.

The stream of humanity got poisoned at the source. Adam started the cycle of sin that has "abounded" or affected every one. We are not held guilty for his sin because we have the same right of making choices that he had.

In a similar way, grace has brought blessing from the Source, the Lord Jesus Christ. Deliverance from sin is available to all. So now we are left with two choices just like Adam at the beginning. We are free to choose freedom *to* sin or freedom *from* sin.

The good results of grace far out-measure the bad results of Adam's sin. Many were made sinners because of him – many are made righteous because they choose Christ. When we do that, the free gift of righteousness is given by God as a permanent possession.

Sin was reigning in me at the first – and death, separation from God, was the result. Now grace reigns and union with God is the result, because life in Christ is eternal. Death is the loser.

"I praise Thee, Father, for this great reconciliation made because of what the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ has given. Amen."

ROMANS 5:20-21

GRACE REIGNS

The matter of sin bringing separation from God did not need the law to make it a fact. That happened when Adam in self-will disobeyed God. But for those who had placed a vain self-confidence in their law-keeping, the Spirit of God points out the fact that the law came alongside of the act of sin so that those who had trusted in the law could see the real sinfulness of sin, and that the trespass, or breaking of the law in any way was far more serious than they thought. The law gives no power to keep the law. It more plainly reveals our natural sinfulness and guilt.

Sin abounds, of that there is no doubt, and it does not fade away but increasingly gets worse. God allowed this to happen, but even after Israel, to whom was given the law and continually broke it, God showed His abundant grace. Instead of the tragedy of sin that happened in the beginning, and the breaking of the law that was given 2500 years later being the focus of our attention, it is the overflowing extent of God's great grace that we are directed to. The law came alongside of sin and further exposed its sinfulness. But grace came and overflowed it all as it flooded to all sinners of every nation, tribe and family. God's grace is extended to every person world-wide.

No matter how deep in sin by nature a person may have gone, God's grace is there for them to take hold of. No matter how self-righteous a law-keeper may attempt to be, God's grace is there for the one who repents and accepts the justification by grace that God offers. The results of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross takes us past all the efforts of a person to reach to God by his or her own effort, and He is able to bring us into God's presence by His own blood. Not only does He present us to God, but He keeps us from falling.

Sin no longer reigns bringing physical and spiritual death as its consequence. Now grace reigns as king. The kingdom of sin had death as its result. The kingdom of grace has brought eternal life through the righteousness that has been paid for by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has been given to us as a gift. Now we are cleared of our condemnation in Adam, and also are cleared of our own personal sins. Our justification has freed us from all condemnation. It is truly the justification of life.

One man brought death - by His death, One Man brought life. One man brought condemnation - the Other Man brought justification. One man brought guilt - the Other Man brought freedom. One man brought fear - the Other Man brought peace. Now our life is in Christ and the bondage of sin is past.

It was in Adam that death reigned over me.
Now in Christ I live in liberty.
In bondage to sin, I had no power.
Now in Christ, the blessings of eternal life on me do shower.
In self-will, as in Adam, I too was under condemnation.
Now in Christ Jesus my Lord, I have full salvation.
In disobedience to God, in Adam I was separated.
Now in Christ I am able to His will to be consecrated.

The closer the law came, the worse sin would get.
In the Lord Jesus Christ, new life He did beget.
The law exposed sin and brought nothing but fear.
In Christ the grace of God was brought very near.
The law showed the darkness of sin and its consequence.
In Christ righteousness came because of the grace He sent.
The law as a schoolmaster brought me to face a righteous God.
In Christ there is cleansing from sin by His precious blood.

Now there is a new king reigning over my life.
Grace has brought salvation, now I live in the light.
Death reigned once as king but by Christ was defeated.
Now sin's price is paid in full and never has to be repeated.
Grace reigns now and through it there is peace and contentment.
There is no power to death to bring a life sentence.
The fact that I will die does not cause me despair.
To die down here will bring me to joy up there.

The life I have in Christ Jesus our Lord is real life indeed.
He has supplied everything necessary to meet my soul's deep need.
His righteousness is mine and now His grace reigns.
Since the Lord Jesus conquered death, things are no longer the same.
My faith is in Him who is the solid Rock of salvation.
Where grace reigns in life there is now condemnation.
So, with calmness and assurance I will live by faith,

Knowing that the One who reigns now is the King of Grace.

“Father God, I thank Thee for the opportunity of being in this place of service for Thee. I can see the evidence of Thy grace in many but I can also see the great losses when man-made laws were imposed. Would it be possible, Father, for Thee to create some sort of incident or events that would be on-going and bring the children of these believers back to consider again the reality of what their parents have, rather than what they feel they didn't have. Also, please help me to present Thy Word in a suitable way tonight in the meeting. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 6:1-2

WE DIED

In saving us for Himself, it is plain that first part of our salvation is the fact that God had to be satisfied legally and able to act toward us in grace in a way that is not compromising to His justice. Christ's suffering and death for us has borne the wrath of righteous demands and took our guilt and condemnation away from us. Now God can "be just and the justifier" of them who believe in Jesus. We rejoice in our standing in Christ by His grace.

So now should we keep sinning so that grace may keep on abounding? Because we are free from the restraints of the law, shall we use our freedom for our own purposes even to commit sin? NO!

This is the fact that we have been taught. In Christ we have already died to sin. We have died! Christ died for us and so we have been made free from the claims of Adam's sin. The actions of grace on our behalf means there is no work we can do to add anything to the grace of God. For those who are not saved, they may think (or say) the more sinning they do, the more grace they will receive. For believers who are conscious of the tendency to sin that is in them, they often want legal rules of "do's" and "don'ts" to live by. Some even think they are free to commit any sin they want because God's grace takes care of that. That is not evidence of a new creation. The fact being taught here is that something has taken place already. We have already died to sin. That is a past act and fact. It is not something that is going on now. We are not to remain in sin because when we shared in Christ's death, we died to sin. He is our federal head who took our place as representative.

What has really happened is our relationship to sin is over. We have died to sin, not for sin. We can't be living in sin and have died to sin at the same time. That is impossible. This whole teaching has to do with our new relationship with God as a new creation in Christ Jesus; not with our practice of the new life. We have died to the world. We died and now our "life is hid with Christ in God." This is plain that the subject is our standing in Christ as a permanent fact, not the state of my Christian life as a believer. We died to sin in Christ's death - this is a fact. We did not die to sin by practice and experience. We are not sinless perfect people by our experiences.

There are many repeated references to our actual identification with Christ in His death in these first verses of Romans 6. Believers are risen with Christ to life because we died with Christ to sin. It is important to differentiate our relationship to sin, from the presence of sin. The presence of sin in our bodies makes it hard to realize we have died to sin, but we know it is true because God says it and we believe it, and live in the good of it by faith.

It may be hard for us to see how God sees us in Christ.
When for our sins our Lord Jesus died, God will not charge us twice.
That legal fact does not change, and though we are not perfect;
We "have died" and now are risen in Christ with nothing added to it.

The tendency to step aside and do some sin by choice,
Is not the issue in these verses for here it is God's voice
That says, "You have died, in Christ you are now alive."
Our standing in Him is secure in spite of sin we may try to hide.

There is another consideration, when new life dwells within,
Even though we at times fail, we do not choose to practice sin.
Struggles against our fleshly nature often may take place.
But our standing in our Lord we do accept by faith.

It may be hard to grasp, and even harder to explain,
That there has been accomplished a victory that is ours in Christ to claim.
We are dead to Adam's sin, that action happened long ago.
God is the One who in His Word declares that this is so.

We do not sin that grace may abound, No, we live in Christ to God.
The bent of life is not to do wrong but to live our life by His Word.
Our actual experience may be, we sin, but over this is this wonderful fact
That God sees those who by blood are justified by the cross-work of the past.

“Gracious God, I worship Thee this morning as I think of this great accomplished fact and what it means to me. It is foreign to me to want to sin or to try to earn Thy favor by works. I honestly want to live holy, righteous and godly this day by Thy grace given to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 6:4. *“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

NEWNESS OF LIFE.

In the *new life* we have been given, the power of sin is broken. It no longer has the power to control us or manipulate us into doing its bidding. The nature that loves sin is buried and we become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away and all things have become new. Thank God, the power of sin is broken!

A *new nature* has been given to us. It is the divine nature that can enjoy God, the things of God, the same things that God enjoys. To be alive to God means we look at events in life, situations in the world and at people, the way God does. In our baptism we testify to the fact that we have new life with Christ. The symbolism of baptism is a powerful, visual statement that I am dead to what I was, because when Christ died, I died. Then when He was buried, the person that I was, was buried with Him. When He rose from the dead, I rose from the dead with Him. The life I live now is one that is alive to God. We can see ourselves alive to the new life - and unresponsive to the old life!

There is *new freedom* in this new life that is empowered by the new nature. We are free to live for God. We are free from the dominion of sin. We are free to obey God. We are free to present ourselves to God. We are free to yield ourselves to be used as instruments of righteousness. We are free to enjoy fellowship with God and to do His will. We no longer are powerless over the old motives and desires of our past life. God has given us a new start and the Holy Spirit helps us to experience in a practical way what God has declared us to be.

“This new life has been such a blessing Father. I look around at others who want what I have, but they are looking for it in all the wrongs places. They are avoiding the Lord Jesus Christ, ignoring the Gospel, and leaving the Bible unopened. I want to intercede for those unbelievers who don't know what they are missing. I also want to intercede for those believers who are trying to get what they can from a sinful world to find some kind of satisfaction. By Thy Spirit, move upon these people that they might turn to the fountain of life, and experience the newness of life that is so wonderful. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 6:3-7

JUSTIFIED FROM SIN

It may be that those whom God has saved sometimes forget what baptism really means. When a believer is baptized, they have confessed they have chosen against sin and their old life. Christ had died unto sin on his or her behalf. He has been buried. Burial is the last link a person has with earth. All earthly ties have been severed and the whole of the past is ended at burial. What great joy it is to us that Christ has been raised up from among the dead and believers are raised up after a true likeness of His resurrection. Baptism has to do with death, not cleansing from sin; with burial, the ending of a former link to earth and that by a true likeness of Christ's resurrection, we enter a new life.

This is not baptism by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. This is not an act of bringing about the death of the old man. This is a testimony that we are on new ground apart from Adam's family who was our representative head. Now our new life is based on a new representative (federal) Head - our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. We were unto His death baptized. Now we are walking about in a new life. This is not just the way we live or the manner of living we choose. This is a new kind of life. People in the Bible times who were raised from the dead did not have a new kind of life. They got their old life back again. The newness of life we live because we are joined to Christ in His risen life, is because we have been made to grow together with Him. A graft into a tree gets its life from the same place as the tree itself. We have been crucified with Christ in the reality of His death. Now we have received the reality of His life, which in baptism, we testify to. That is why believers do not continue in sin. We have this new life. Paul said, "To me to live is Christ." We live in the effects of what Christ did when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

Now our old body of sin is annulled. Our old man, as we were in Adam our federal head in the past, has been crucified with Christ, and we have put off the old man. Yet he exists, so those things that were our manner of life before, we put off, and put on the new man which is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Our spirit has experienced "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," but our bodies have not. Our inward man has been made new by the Holy Spirit but not our bodies. So, we have an on-going "war against the flesh."

These truths have to do with what we are, not of what we have done. We have been crucified with Christ. We have been buried with Him by baptism into death. We have been raised to walk in newness of life. Our relationship to sin is clearly stated, "We have died to sin." Our relationship to God also is plain, "We are alive to God." Now we walk in faith believing what God has said. We are in Christ, therefore our relationship to sin is the same as that of our Lord Jesus Christ. His death for sin happened once. It is not something that has to be redone. Our response is to consider that as a real fact. The power of sin has been annulled. We are declared righteous - freed from sin - justified from sin. This is not a gradual working out of efforts on our part or even on God's part. This is a fact that God Himself has accomplished and declares done.

When we as believers reckon or acknowledge that this is true, life then becomes what God intended. We "walk in the light." We are "children of light." We are "light in the Lord." The realization of the glory of this fact is a liberty that cannot be described because we are now freed to love and serve the Lord empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our joy is not in what we may be able to accomplish from day to day, but in what has been accomplished for us by God and is reckoned by Him to be done forever.

What glory, what joy to walk and live in this new life!
No conflict is necessary, no grief and no strife -
To make us accepted in Christ by our God -
For He has freed us from being bondmen to the world.

The fact of our identification with Christ is made clear.
Through His death, burial and resurrection we have been brought near
To Him so that in Him we died, were buried and rose again -
And in the power of newness of life our new life begins.

Now we are raised like Christ Himself was raised.
To the glory of the Father we now give Him our praise.
We are so close to Christ that together we grow.
And the life of God in His people to others He shows.

It is a true fact that in Christ I have died.
The sin-principle in me no more does abide.
In baptism the burial signifies an end
To the Adam-life to which we did once attend.

The resurrection of Christ indicates that I am risen too
The life of the past which claimed me is forever through.
This power of new life has freed me from the power of sin.
And the life I now live is a new life lived by faith in Him.

We do not now serve sin in this new life of ours.
The Spirit of God to this new man gives us the power
To do what God wants and that gives me great joy;
For I can experience victory over sins that annoy.

"O God and Father of the new life I have: I find this new life to be so satisfying that I would never want anything else. And yet, I am aware of the nature that is within me, that is so deceitful and would seek to claim priority over my mind and actions. O God, in Thee do I trust to keep this weak servant from falling and dishonoring Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 6:8-11

DEATH HAS NO DOMINION

Christ's death and resurrection has changed everything for those who have died with Him. The old person has been crucified with Christ and now lives with Him in fellowship and can participate with Him in all the activities of this new life. This is in contrast to our death with Him, not to our eternal future although that is a fact as well. This life we live has begun but is not completed. This new life affects all of our activities. Our

home life, our family life, our business and our worship - everything about this new life, we are able to live with enthusiasm and vigor. Death and that old life no longer has mastery over us.

The wages that sin held over us has ended. This resurrected life in Christ is forever. On our sins, death had its time of dominion but it is over now. Death held the Lord for three days and nights. But all that has passed and is finished for us too. Our bodies may be temporarily in the earth until the Lord's coming, but death has no dominion over us. This resurrection life will never end.

Christ died unto sin once. This is not His death for our sin but has to do with our relationship to sin, not the payment of sin. So we have now been made the righteousness of God in Him. We have been released from the old dominion of death because of Adam's sin. Now we are given righteousness and holiness of our own through the new Head. We have started a new life in Christ Jesus. This life has a new occupation and goal. We now live unto God.

The effect produced by dying to sin is that an act has been accomplished and is finished. We have died unto sin in our Great Substitute and Federal Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are now connected to God because we are in Christ Jesus. He was raised from among the dead ones. That is over, it has passed, so we are dead unto sin and present ourselves as those who are alive also from among the dead ones. It may be difficult to reckon this to be true because of our bodily attraction to the things of the earth. We wouldn't have to "reckon" this if sin was gone from our bodies.

This reckoning is something we do by faith. Faith doesn't follow the path of human consciousness in our bodies, but recognizes the facts because God says they are facts. God says we are dead to sin, so it is a fact that we are dead to sin - even if we do not "feel" like it. Our history now is one we share with Christ. It becomes real to us as we walk according to God's Word by faith. Faith knows that God has dealt with all that separated us from God. Now we can deal with the problems that arise to tempt us by the promises that God has given us - you are dead to sin and you are alive to God through Jesus Christ.

We may not always feel like this is a fact.
But God has assured us that when Christ did act
On our behalf, He gave us new life
To live unto God as we walk in the light.

We sometimes have a problem to live this out.
But the Spirit of God assists us to bring this about.
His grace has made this real to us, but still it must be
I reckon myself dead to sin, and alive in Christ and free.

The authority we live under is no longer sin.
We are dead to that tyrant and alive to Him
Who has died unto death, sin and all their claims,
And has given us authority of new life by the power of His name.

"Father God, the freedom from the mastery of sin is certainly true liberty. Many people live in fear of death and consequently do not really experience the joy of life in Christ daily. I truly thank Thee for allowing me to live alive unto Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 6:11. *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

DEAD BUT ALIVE.

Something very remarkable has happened that changed my life completely. I died when Christ died for my sins. He did that once for all. It does not have to be repeated either for me or by me. Now that He is alive, I am alive and death (separation from God) cannot happen, either to Him or to me because now, I am dead to sin (separated from sin) and made alive to God through Christ.

The result of this is that I am not powerless against sin. I do not have to let sin rule me. Now everything I am and have can be used by God and for God. But I still have my will, and sin still tries to claim my time and as much of me as it can. I have a choice still.

In my new life I want to, and by God's help, can serve Him. The proof of new life is in my obedience to the One I serve. By God's grace, I do not want to serve sin even for a little bit or for some special reason. By God's grace, I want to be available to Him at all times.

“I am so grateful Father, for this life Thou hast given me. It has been a long time since I was under the dominion of sin, but even now sin tries to get the upper hand and bring me down to where I am of no use to Thee. I pray that I will never lose sight of this new life and the privilege of serving Thee in the freedom of grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 6:12-14

INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is a fact that we have died to sin and we are now alive in Christ. But the application of that fact to the various members of our body is a matter of our will. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." With the mouth confession is made that testifies as to what has happened. Because of this new position in Christ that has freed us from the bondage Adam had placed us under as our representative head, we do have authority and potential control over the instruments of our body. These tools of the flesh do not rule us, we rule them. It is up to us to take control of their potential for good or evil.

How can this be done? By deliberately choosing to obey God and refuse the actions that lead to sin, we assume an attitude that must be taken. Our feelings toward sin are not dead. The old man is attracted by them. By faith we obey God who commands us to be dead to sin and alive to the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to know our weaknesses and the things that tempt us. Those things that tempt and attract us, we must remove ourselves from, and stay away from by practicing self-restraint. It is important that believers develop good habits and areas of service for God that fill our "instruments" so the Holy Spirit can give us the power to do God's will.

We are waiting for the redemption of our bodies but that won't happen until the Lord comes. We cannot permit our bodies to control us. By reckoning ourselves as having died, we live another kind of life where our hands, feet, eyes, ears and instruments of our bodies are directed to what God has for them to do. This is not really what consecration is but an attitude within our power to take. As we really are positionally in God's sight is how we are to present ourselves. But in particular, the instruments of our bodies are like tools to be used for appropriate purposes. They were used for sin. Now they are instruments to be used for righteousness.

Sin is not our master that uses the law to make its demands and then says blessings will come later if we fulfill its commandments. We are not under that law that would leave us helpless and in permanent bondage because we cannot fulfill it. Our position now is under grace that blesses us first and then empowers us to bring fruit after.

These tools that we know as eyes and legs and hands,
Are to be subject to our will, not to rule the man.
Where used improperly or for the wrong purposes and reasons,
Can take advantage of us and exploit our weakness.

So how can I obey this command to not let sin reign?
Those temptations don't quit, they come again and again.
If I can recognize them and deliberately stay away -
Then there is help from God's strength so I do not stray.

There is also the responsibility to consciously reject bad habits.
And when there is some opportunity for good works, I must grab it,
Because my body-instruments are going to, in some way be used.
And I have the choice of free will to submit or to refuse.

God has promised grace that we can ask for at His throne.
When He gives grace to the humble, we are not on our own.
So, these body-tools God has made available to us -
Have potential for good or bad, to be a negative or a plus.

It is well for me to ask myself, am I using these instruments to good use?
The way I use them is really up to me to choose.
When I offer myself as a willing servant to God;
He will give the power and grace to serve Him as I should.

I am not under law in any way, I am under grace.
These instruments of service I can use for God by faith
To bring glory to God and blessing and benefits to man,
Serving with an honest desire to do it in the best way I can.

"Thou art a faithful God to me, heavenly Father, and I would like to serve Thee in a way that Thou will never be ashamed of me. Help me to discern in a sensible way, the things I apply my efforts to, that they may be such as can bring honor to Thee. Keep me from wasting effort on things that don't count. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 6:15-18

APPRENTICESHIP

To learn a craft or a particular skill, a person desires to join or present himself to one who already has proven himself skillful in that area of service. In that way, over a period of time, they not only learn the theory but also the finer points that can only be learned by experience. This second question, though similar to the one asked in verse 1, has to do with our service for God rather than our new life in Christ. It is possible for us to be saved and brought into the blessings of the Risen Christ, and not understand the terrible hold sin has on a person. The bondage of sin is as real as the guilt of sin. One may continue in sin and its slavery because our bodies are still subject to obey sin if we do not present ourselves as servants to obey righteousness.

We have the responsibility to make a serious decision in this case. Are we going to continue in the apprenticeship to sin or change our vocation to be apprenticed to righteousness? God who has saved us when we were presented with the Gospel, now wants us to present ourselves in the obedience of faith, to righteousness. We obeyed the doctrine of the Gospel, the pattern of teaching of salvation being provided by the work of Christ on the cross. We were handed over to that great doctrine of truth which we believed from the heart. Now we are free to continue to obey that truth and the righteousness produced as a result of it. We were handed over, or delivered over to the Gospel. We have been transferred to the teaching of the work of Christ on the cross that has brought us salvation. This is similar to the delivering of Israel over to Moses and the teaching of the law after it was given. Now we have been delivered over to this doctrine. Now we are to obey it as servants who are apprenticed to this great message.

It really is incumbent upon us to wholeheartedly give ourselves to love our Master, take His yoke upon us and learn of Him and from Him. By following Him, we will become skilled in the work of being "fishers of men," teachers of good things," "servants of God." This is not a half-hearted service with part of us serving sin and another part serving God. The freedom to serve righteousness opens to us a whole field of serving in the Gospel and all the blessing that accompanies that glorious message. What a great relief it is to be free from the bondage of sin! What a great privilege to be servants of righteousness!

I do have choices to live by in life,
Even though I am a child of the King.
It will always please God and will always be right,
If my motivation is that I am able to bring
Some spiritual benefit given in Christ's name
That will bless others and be a blessing to God.
The whole point of service is that in some way I am
Able to pass on truth that will honor the Lord.

To be a servant of sin really is to deny
What God intended when He chose to save me.
From out of the abundance of the heavenly supply,
Comes eternal blessings that the eyes of man cannot see.
Servants of righteousness are not dealing with things
That bring some aid or some temporary pleasure.
We are to present truths to which faith can cling
And they result in spiritual blessings people can treasure.

We have obeyed from the heart when faith in Christ was placed,
The truth of the Gospel to which we were delivered.
The path of righteousness is easy for us to trace;
Now to this service we can give our full endeavor.
Into Christ's death we were buried in our baptism
That severed our link to the power of sin.
Now the fact is that in Christ we now have risen
And our life is lived serving righteousness for Him.

This divine nature that has made us now to be free
From being servants to sin and its claims;

Challenges us that our genuine commitment will be
To be servants of righteousness in the power of Christ's name.
As a servant I need to act confidently in faith -
Not to linger or serve in a half-hearted way.
Through the Holy Spirit's power may I serve with grace,
And enthusiasm that continues day after day.

"Gracious God and Father: may this time of service we are involved in presently be able to bring blessing to others, honor to Thee and fruit that will last to Thy glory. May the ministry given produce righteousness that will strengthen Thy work here and in each place we will be. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 6:19-23

YOUR FRUIT

It is impossible for us to be without some form of service as human beings. We all are serving someone or something. To say I am "independent" is a deception because there are moral powers at work that we submit to. We cannot avoid serving something. Neutrality is not possible. So we are either serving uncleanness inwardly, and iniquity and lawlessness outwardly, or we are serving righteousness. There are those who declare they are "free-thinkers" and deceive themselves into thinking they are thinking beyond the influence of others. They fool themselves into thinking no one else has ever had the intellectually free thoughts they have. Such people insist that they are not influenced by anything but their own independent opinions. This, of course, is not possible.

We were under the control of our sinful nature received from Adam at the very beginning of our life. It is in our gene pool received from our parents that we have the inherent tendency to willful sin. When a person receives Christ by faith, everything is changed and there is a new ability given to serve righteousness. There was the illusion before we were saved by grace that we were free to do what we wanted. At first it was unknown to us that we were not at liberty at all until we tried to break free from those things that had us under their control - like the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Evil thinking led to evil speaking. Evil speaking led to evil activities. Evil activities led to inevitable consequences over which we had no control. The results, "the fruit" of sin, ended up in the "wages of sin" - death. The fruit of the service of sin only made us ashamed. Freedom to sin as we wanted and fruitless as to any good result because God was not in our thoughts, only results ultimately in shame and death.

But now there is the new, true freedom to be a willing bondservant of Jesus Christ. The old master had insatiable demands. The New Master motivates us by His "great love wherewith He loved us." This gift of eternal life is the end of this path we have started on, but it is also the present possession in life that guides us to be faithful and useful servants of God. The blessed fruit of holiness is all the things that are involved in the living out of this eternal life. It becomes the delight of the servants of God to know God is working in us "to will and to do His good pleasure." Sin is an awful master with awful wages. Grace has bestowed the wonderful gift of eternal life. This free gift of God was given to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Everything about this new life is in Him. He was the propitiation for us at the beginning of God's work for us. All through life God's grace is manifested to us in all of the aspects of our living presently. Looking ahead into the eternal future nothing will separate us from "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God's grace is the reason behind every blessing we have in Christ now and forever. We started in Adam, our representative head, in need of God's grace. In grace, Christ came into the world "full of grace and truth." In the death of Christ on the cross, He saved us by His grace. Now Christ is our representative Man, our federal Head, "the second Adam." Our standing in Him now is by His grace. We are accepted before God in Christ now, and will through the eternal ages yet to come, show "the exceeding riches of His grace."

We are not neutral people without allegiance or obligation.
To be servants of God is our privilege as a result of our salvation.
To be servants of sin would be to fail in that sacred trust
That God has granted to be carried out by each one of us.

This does not mean I am perfect and never sin,
Because in this human flesh there is still hidden within
A tendency to self-will and to yield to temptation,
And when that happens there is in me a sense of condemnation.

Now there is a new power to serve from inside this new man.
There is a desire to serve righteousness and holiness in whatever way I can.
The bondage to sin and death which had me so bound,

Has been broken by grace when God in mercy me found.

Not now as a slave to sin but free to be a bondservant to God,
Is not a regretful service, but is one in every way good.
I can give my mind and soul, my heart and my will,
To the blessed service of God and live in liberty still.

"Father, I am grateful for the privilege of serving Thee in holy things. May our worship and service today be in every way honoring and glorifying to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 7:1-6

FREEDOM ILLUSTRATED

Often there are ways to explain a subject from things that everyone knows and can easily understand. From Romans 6:14 we find the plain statement, "ye are not under law but under grace," is now explained by the universal understanding of the law of marriage. The verses following 6:14 up to 7:1, are a sort of parenthesis bringing us to the statement, which really means, "Or are you ignorant of this law-principle that rules us only as long as we live to sin?" When we died to sin, that bond, illustrated by the bonds of marriage broken at the death of a spouse, was no longer a law to us. The illustration used would be known world-wide in every culture. Death breaks a legal bond and concludes a relationship making a new relationship possible.

Now these Jewish Christians who in their past had been placed by God under the law given to Moses, publicly; they too have died, not just to the law-principle under which every person lives, but also to that law of Jewish ordinances and commands. The only fruit that keepers of the law could bring was fruit unto death because the law condemned everyone who could not keep it perfectly. Now, having died in Christ, Jewish believers were dead to that law (that spouse) and were joined by God's grace to the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Jewish and Gentile believers are not under law as a principle, but are under grace as an accomplished blessing that is theirs. We live by faith now, not by our efforts to please God. The Holy Spirit gives power within to live in good conscience to God by the new nature He has placed in us, not by keeping the old commandments. Every believer regardless of their background, is now called upon to live righteously and holy before God. This is not impossible because this is done through our identification with Christ, or "through the body of Christ." Now we are joined to Another, the One who in His body was made sin for us when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He has been raised from among the dead and we have risen in Him. Now the fruit of the Spirit is able to be produced and brought to God because of this new life.

In the past Jewish people were made very conscious of sin because of the standards of the law, and it condemned them to death. The restraints that were broken only brought death even after earnest struggles to keep those laws. But now that law is annulled, done away with, put out of business. No longer does it hold the one who was a "law-keeper." That person is able now to serve God from a whole new motivation. The demands that were so precise and challenging to keep, have given way to a spiritual motivation within that has love as its reason. Now service for God is done with the spirit of freedom and appreciation for what the God of grace has done. We live in the freedom of the grace of God. The illustration of husband and wife is that of the law-principle under which everyone in the world lives. The law Moses gave is seen in this passage as governing the relationship by its "picky" demands that made living tedious. In this new relationship with Christ, there is the glorious freedom of serving God out of love and appreciation that brings joy to the relationship.

It is not under pressure that we seek to please God,
The motivation is much higher than that.
There is a relationship that began when the Lord
For us gave everything that He had
To free us from that death-principle that had held
Us in bondage and slavery to death.
But now by God's grace we are freed to tell
Of the new life with which we are blessed.

I never could live up to the standard of the law.
Wherever I turned I was condemned.
When by faith Christ dying for me, I saw
That through His blood I am redeemed.
More than that is the fact that in Him I have died,
Now in Him I live a new life.
A new relationship is formed, in Him I abide,
And am called to walk with Him in the light.

Fruitless living under the past federal head,
Produced nothing that could give God any glory.
In the strength of the Spirit, to the Adam-life I'm dead,
And living life for God is a whole new story.
A Gentile by nature, there were law-principles to obey,
But self-will brought only fruit that was useless.
Now dead to that old life, I live my life today
To God Himself, a life of potential fruitfulness.

I was never under the law God gave on Sinai's mount,
My nationality was that of those outside those bounds.
Even so, those laws condemned because I can't surmount
The huge obstacles that that written code surround.
There is no relief from guilt whether synagogue or church,
The rules of life and law I still did break.
God for me in richest grace for this sinner made a search,
And through the Gospel message a new creation He did make.

Now I am not trying to meet an unreachable code,
God's grace has provided a new man to please Him.
I have found my rest in Christ and in Him my abode,
Where there is fruitful freedom not under the dominion of sin.
Released to walk with God in newness of life,
I find this blessing a joy most profound.
Not under the cloud of darkness and strife,
In this place God's marvelous grace does abound.

“Father God, this example of the way a new relationship is formed when one comes to Christ for salvation, is easily understood. This new life is not one of tension and fear of failure, but of willingly and lovingly seeking to do Thy will. I truly want to do this. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 7:7-13

THE STRUGGLE

When we first faced up to the danger we were in because of our nature as sinners, the law of God clarified the position sin had left us in. The sense of something missing, of dissatisfaction and of guilt was brought into the light of God's holiness when the law that condemned us was used to bring us to Christ. It truly was our schoolmaster that directed us to the Savior. What joy and thankfulness we had when the Gospel revealed the grace of God to us in Christ giving His life as a ransom for us. The delight and relief of being in Christ was the occupation of our mind and heart. We had died with Christ and were risen with Him and free in Him.

And then - after the morning glow of new life had settled into the routine of every-day new life, we were conscious of indwelling sin that was still with us. There was no doubt that Christ had "suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." But this sin within still made itself known. The Holy Spirit is within, so why is there this struggle? This "Slough of Despond" often bogs down the new believer who thought they were done with sin and they try various means to deal with this struggle. Some become discouraged and wonder if they are saved at all. Some fall under the influence of teachers who say they have lost their salvation. Thinking this is true, they re-profess salvation again believing they can start all over, and the confusion increases rather than is solved. Others will go back to being "law-keepers" and try by self-imposed, or others-imposed "do's and don'ts" to overcome the evil desires (coveting) within. There are some misguided instructors who seek to move them into a legalistic frame of reference so they can seek to maintain holiness and live in good conscience.

Paul, the apostle who the Spirit of God used to write this letter, seemed to have been doing pretty good when he was first saved. He was giving his testimony and preaching the Gospel publicly. He kept in with the Christians at Jerusalem and was a power for God and a help to God's people. Then he was sent to Arabia for three years and from there to Tarsus. It must have been at one of those places he became conscious of the evil desires (coveting) within him still. The law said, "Thou shalt not covet," and he coveted. Perhaps Paul, like most law-keepers, was concerned with the outward things of the law - the positive and negative things people try to keep. We all have to admit that there is within us the tendency to evil desires and that sin tends to exploit its power over us by using the commandment to condemn us. Hence the struggle that seeks to empower a believer and make them ineffective.

This struggle can be avoided if we grasp the true fact of having died with Christ and now have been raised with Him. Faith claims what we may not feel. I am dead unto sin and I am alive unto God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The law points out the evil desire and sin seeks to condemn me because of that. But a living vital faith in Christ and what He has done, and what the Word of God says is true, keeps that evil desire, the temptation, from being yielded to. Faith in what God says keeps this from being a concern to us in relation to stumbling with doubts and fears. The law is like a sign that says, "No Trespassing." Wise people will obey the sign and find another way to reach the desired destination without a struggle. The headstrong person who does not obey the sign (the law) will have to face the consequences imposed by the law. The law is not the problem. It is doing what it is supposed to do. Yielding to self-will is the problem. That self-will was dealt with when we died to the old Adam. Believe it, and live in the good of it.

Sin will try to take advantage of us by using legalism imposed sometimes by the man-made laws of men, who interpret the law to be our guide into on-going righteousness and victory over sin. This keeps us from the liberty we have in Christ. The law is good because it does what it is supposed to - expose sin. Sin will deceive anyone who thinks they can keep it to be accepted by God. An honest person will apply that law with its commands to himself, and praise God that he is free from it because he had died in Christ. The law has no authority over a dead person. Now he lives in the Risen Christ in freedom from the law that showed him how terrible sin really is.

It did what it was supposed to, it condemned me.
It gave me a mirror glass myself to really see.
It showed me what was wrong, what I was truly like.
It exposed me to God's holiness by the law's perfect light.

It condemned by exposing what I once thought was hid.
It showed sin within, not just in the things I did.
It made me understand sin is not only a deed or act.
It made me aware of this, sin in me is a real fact.

It took away all excuses to continue on just the same.
It made me to know there was no one else I could blame
For the sin that was in me, not just the outward deeds.
It made me stop to consider the Word of God I must heed.

There is no point of me struggling to make myself clean.
The death of Jesus Christ for me, dealt with all that sin.
To try as a Christian to make myself more acceptable
By the things I do, must really be to God very contemptible.

For Christ has accomplished what I could never do.
It is not right for me to try and add anything to a work that is through.
The response I should have is simply to trust and obey,
And gratefully accept that for which I cannot pay.

No, I am not against the law, the law is really for me.
It was given by God as a perfect standard that I can see
What is holy by God's standards, which are very different than mine.
When I submit to the warnings of law, the right way I can find.

But the truth is quite clear to me, people misuse the law.
They think that by self-effort, they can fulfill them all,
Not realizing that in Christ believers to those demands are dead.
And now we are alive to God through Christ our Risen Head.

"Heavenly Father, it is my desire to give honor to Thee here this morning. For Thy great grace, I give Thee thanks. For saving me, I will forever be grateful. For being so patient with me in my failures and mistakes, I humbly thank Thee. For allowing me to hold Thy Word in my hand, read it and speak to others of Thy revealed truth, this unworthy and unprofitable servant bows to honor Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 7:15. *"For that which I do I allow not: for that what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."*

CONFLICT.

At first it seemed too bad to me, why was the job not done;
Why could not God have made me so I never again would sin?
If only I could be down here, like I will be in heaven,

Why, I would be a perfect saint, not just a sinner who's forgiven.

As time went on, I came to learn, God has given me a work to do.
I am here to represent Him, until this life is through.
If I had no ability to make choices for good or bad;
People would not understand, why I am sad or glad.

Sometimes I want to do what's wrong, even though I do know better.
The evil that is all around, I know binds like a fetter.
I disapprove, I know it's wrong, and God helps me not to act;
But it still lies, contrary, near - a grief, but still a fact.

I am confident a fact of life divine, is this real desire;
To want what's right, it's fixed in us, God did in us inspire
A life that still hates evil, and really wants what's good;
And evil is a source of grief, we continually want to avoid.

However, doing wrong is an experience we all will have;
But liking it is impossible, a new nature God did give.
That's why the conflict rises, when temptations come so near;
A victory is available, for Jesus Christ is near.

When things around, so contrary are, to what I really want;
Victory is found in Christ; He empowers to do what's right.
The flesh is still the flesh, and will never change its subtle ways;
But when my mind is in control; what God wants, I'll do and say.

“O Father, who knows me well: I am not interested in following the ways of the flesh. I read all those personal pronouns in chapter 7, and read “Lord” once, and I can see what happens when I am looking at myself. I raise my eyes above the mirror and would see Him - and I am thankful when conflicts end. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 7:14-20

UNSEEN BUT REAL

How do we deal with the desires to sin that are within us and it seems we have no control over? We should remember first, that in the path of faith, the desperate struggles against indwelling sin should not be normal Christian experience. We who God has saved by His grace alone have been crucified with Christ, yet we live because Christ lives in us. Christ is our righteousness and when we live our life through Him, the Holy Spirit within gives power to deal with the evil desires of sin. When we yield to those inward sinful desires, it is our carnal (fleshly) desires that turn us aside from the deliverance we enjoy by faith. It is never our wishful desire to sin but the principle of sin that challenges us. Being brought into captivity by that sin-principle that is still in the flesh is not what a Christian wants at all. The law with its rules, as good as it is, is not the answer. Self-will or self-determination and relying on one's own strength to overcome sin is not the answer. Becoming a Christian does not eliminate all sin and temptation from a believer's life.

We face a fact: being born again happens in a moment but becoming like Christ is a life-long process. To try to please God by keeping rules and laws without the Holy Spirit's power is absolutely futile. By our nature we still are limited by the flesh from which we have not yet been delivered. There is a difference between the "natural man who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," and the carnal man who cannot please God in the flesh. We can be delivered out of the state of being carnal. When first saved there was the joy of forgiveness and being justified by the blood of Christ. Soon after, we find there is still a kind of slavery that wants to keep us from the joy of being what we really want to be as a new creation in Christ Jesus. How very important to realize that it is not the one who is risen with Christ that tends to the temptations of the flesh, but it is sin that is still in us and manipulates our body.

Of course, we do not want that sinful nature to have control of our lives, but unless we see ourselves as God sees us, and we find our delight in that fact of our position in Christ, we will find ourselves in a state of unhappiness and sometimes doubt.

We cannot overcome that condition of soul by mere willpower. It is the power of Christ that is available to us that gives us victory over sin. True, it is sin that makes us do what we know is wrong, but again we must realize this is an unnecessary battle if we recognize our position as having died to sin and are alive to God in the Risen Christ. Living by faith in the Son of God "who loved me and gave Himself for me," is normal Christian living.

The testing time is not over, Father, I know this to be true.
But I find living on higher ground makes it much easier to get through
Those temptations and attractions that lead into the bog-land of sin
That threatens me on a daily basis because of the old nature within.

I've found it to be true, Father, that when I am conscious of Thee,
At the beginning of each day through Thy Word speaking to me
Through the scriptures I read and the thoughts Thou dost give -
That those attractions of sin don't fit the way that I live.

But I know myself a little, Father, though not in the way You do.
And there still lurks in this flesh of mine a sin-nature so cruel,
That it seeks to bring me down in ways totally unexpected,
Because there is some inner "wishing" that leaves my flesh infected.

So I reach out to Thee, Father, as each new morning breaks,
For within is a hunger for righteousness that in my soul awakes.
I so like this higher ground and I pray help from Thee for me to keep
From yielding to that sin within when Thy face I seek.

Please, Father, consider the weakness of Thy servant,
And build a bulwark of truth in me that sin can't usurp.
May I always be ready to claim the Spirit's power -
And keep my faith in Thee strong every day and every hour. **In the name of the Lord
Jesus Christ, Amen."**

ROMANS 7:21-25

THE MIND - THE FLESH

To deny the fact of sin being present in us after we are saved, is not only dishonest, but is dangerous. That kind of deception is a total misrepresentation of what sin really is and the potential for evil that it can bring to the child of God. The "inward man," the "new creation in Christ Jesus" is conscious of what God intends because the Holy Spirit is within. He or she does not want that sin working within. Unbelievers do not have that inward hatred of sin that so provokes the true Christian. The saints who have been set apart for God, delight in God, love God, love God's Word and God's people - but still have within an awareness and an abhorrence of "the body of this death."

This struggle continues, until the believer in Christ recognizes and admits to the fact, they have no power to defeat indwelling sin in their own body with their own strength. Keeping the law has been proven to be impossible, and its reason anyway is to make us conscious of sin - and it certainly does that! Self-effort to cast off binding habits that have been returned to, does not work. "Mind over matter" has no power to overcome sin. Some have tried to avoid the problem by changing the definition of sin to suit a modern society. To change the public perception of sin, does not change the nature of sin and what it is in God's eyes. This tension in the Christian life may continue daily causing the joy and enthusiasm we had when we were first saved, to seem like an impossible dream from the past.

Where do we go and what can we do? Who can deliver us? Forgiveness of sin took place when we died in Christ. We were saved from the guilt of sin and the penalty of sin. That has passed. What the child of God who has succumbed to the power of indwelling sin needs now, is deliverance from that power. The fear of coming judgment for sin is not the problem, but the bondage to sin that he is experiencing now is. When we are confused and, perhaps at times, overwhelmed by the appeal that sin still has, we need the deliverance that the power of Christ gives us. Before we were saved, we had to look to Christ, not to ourselves or any other person to find the peace that was made through His death. So now also, we look outside of ourselves to Christ in whom we died to sin and the condemnation of the law.

Christ does not have to die again for our deliverance from sin's power. The power to do that is available for us to claim. The flesh serves the law of sin, but our mind gladly serves the law of God - really, the will of God. Now the walk of the child of God is to walk in the Spirit who gives us the power to live the Christian life.

The path of faith and the struggle with the flesh have no part with each other. The flesh will seek to deny itself, or inflict suffering or some kind of cost on itself to deal with indwelling sin - anything but death and real separation from sin by living in Christ. The person who lives by faith does not need to go through these struggles when we have "reckoned ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." When our faith in Christ is strong and the Holy Spirit is free to guide us, we will "triumph in Christ." Our help to deal with the

temptations of the old nature, has to come from outside our own human will. To live daily in the blessings of being in Christ is normal Christian living. The other is sub-normal and is not intended to be the experience of every believer.

The old man is dead, but not the body as yet.
My spirit and soul are redeemed, but until we get
The new body that will be changed in a moment of time,
I will have to reckon as dead this deceptive flesh of mine.

Over time I have learned more of what really took place
When I repented of my sin and God saved me by His grace.
I did die in Christ and forgiveness of my sin is real.
That is an undeniable fact, not based on what I feel.

For awhile I wondered why when I became conscious that within
There was a tendency, if not a real desire, to sin.
The efforts to change by self-will did not even begin to work -
And the temptations to sin, the awakened new nature did hurt.

But when I took time to stop self-efforts and the Word of God I read,
I realized that though my spirit and soul are redeemed, my body to sin is not dead.
So then came the test, was I willing to live by faith alone?
Or try by my own efforts still to add works to what Christ had done.

There was no question in my mind as to whether I was saved.
I had rested, and still do, on the price for sin Christ paid.
It took awhile to realize that one of the acts of my conscience,
Was to alert me to the truth that through Christ is daily deliverance.

I know it is true that sin is still in my members,
And lurks there waiting to light like a fire from coal embers.
Thanks be to God, by the Holy Spirit giving power.
Deliverance is there for me and its available hour after hour.

The Lord Jesus' work paid the sin price once for all.
Daily deliverance from sin is through Him when I call
Upon Him in faith, and I know it is true
That sin has no dominion over what I say and do.

What a relief! What a joy to live daily by faith,
And constantly experience the blessings of God's grace.
There isn't the guilt of sin seeking to claim
A preeminence over me, for there is power in Christ's name.

As the older I get in this walk of faith in the Lord,
I find things keep getting clearer as I read His Word.
To live daily by faith is normal Christian living each day.
And indwelling sin by truth applied is able to be kept at bay.

"Gracious God my Father, I pray Thee today to please keep me from being complacent about sin. At the same time, I praise Thee for giving power over sin through the Lord Jesus Christ and the strength given by the Spirit. Please keep me from sinful thoughts and words today. Help me to speak words of grace and truth as ministry is given to Thy people tonight. And please give comfort to those who are sorrowing today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 7:25. *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."*

WITH THE MIND.

There is this conflict in me that I wish was not there. A part of me that is linked to my senses, namely my physical and mortal flesh that wants to keep me doing what is natural to a sinful nature. How am I supposed to cope with these tensions that I know are not of God? These are so real that they are like a law or rule that I am supposed to submit to. After all, those who are around do those things and think nothing of it.

But since I have been born again there is a new part of me that wants to do what God wants. This is not compatible at all with what my flesh-nature wants. I have a struggle since I have been saved that I didn't have before. Which part of me, the old part or the new part, am I going to obey? In my own strength I cannot

handle the old nature pressures, but through my Savior, Jesus; the Anointed One, Christ; who is now my Lord – I can make the right choices and serve the law of God. The conflict is over – the Word of God wins – the flesh has lost.

“I can understand Father God, what Paul was writing about as the Spirit of God led him through these frustrations. Thanks so much for letting me know the value of the law of God in my life. Too often I allow myself to think in terms of the law of sin and death that is all around me. Today I lift up my eyes above all of that and see the victory the Lord Jesus Christ won and how I am in the good of it permanently. I praise and honor Thee for this acceptance and awareness. I am dead to sin - I am alive to God - and I thank Thee for this and give Thee all the glory. Amen.”

ROMANS 8:1-4

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT

A wonderful and gracious pronouncement from the seat of righteous justice introduces another fundamental part of the doctrine of the Gospel. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The blood of Christ shed on the cross has cleansed us from all sin. The person who accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior has died with Christ to sin and to the sin-principle that Adam had brought us into. Now because of the triumphs of the grace of God, we are not under law but under grace. Sin does not rule over us. There is deliverance from the struggle we may have with indwelling sin in our bodies of flesh, through our Lord Jesus Christ. All of His great work has brought us a new freedom. The work of Christ has already been done for us. Now the Holy Spirit makes this new life to be ours. We have been declared "Not guilty!" and are free in Christ Jesus.

The power of the Holy Spirit was evident at the creation of the world. The power of the Holy Spirit was also seen when the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. That same Person and that same power has freed us from the law of sin and death. So, the delivered believer has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit and brought under a new law - the law of life in Christ Jesus. Looking back there has been a whole series of pages turned that unfold the glorious Gospel. We started out condemned. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Now through the gracious work of God - there is "no condemnation." Between those two phrases, a great unfolding of the way of salvation has revealed that the law of sin and death has no authority over those who have new life in Christ and live under "the law of the Spirit of life."

We not only have new freedom and a new law of life we live by, but we have new power from this new law of the Spirit of life. We were not able under the old law to live a holy life because of the flesh. Now this new power enables us to walk according to the Spirit. We are not in bondage to the flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ, when here in the flesh was absolutely perfect, even though He was "found in fashion as a man." He put away our sin and guilt of sin by His blood when we were crucified with Him. Our sin was judged and fear of condemnation is past.

The law was powerless to free us because of our flesh. But Christ condemned that when He was here in the flesh because of His perfection as a man. Now we can, in Christ, fulfill the righteousness of the law by being declared holy and without blame before Him in love. Now that we are declared righteous, that righteousness is not fulfilled *by* us, but *in* us, when we choose to walk according to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has all power and we have the choice to walk according to the Spirit within us. That new freedom, that new law of life, that new power creates in us a new desire to walk holy and blameless before our Lord and before men as well. This sanctification of life is a work of the Holy Spirit.

“No condemnation!” is a blessed word.
Perhaps the most appreciated one ever heard,
Because it lifts up the head of the guilty one,
And says all legal claims against him are gone.

Now there is a new freedom to live by faith a new life,
With the demands of law removed so there is no strife.
The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus
Is the same law that from sin and death has freed us.

We were powerless in the flesh to overcome sin.
But the law of the Holy Spirit who dwells within
Has made possible the fulfillment of the demands of the law
That kept us in bondage because we could not keep them at all.

Now the righteous requirements have all been met,
When God sent His Son in the flesh that we might get
Deliverance and freedom, new power and new desire.
Now being free in Christ, to holy living we aspire.

“When Thou didst send Thy Son, Gracious Father, what a great door to freedom and life was opened by His obedience and death. When He sent the Holy Spirit, what a blessing that needed power and guidance was given to weak and wandering people. For this spirit of life in Christ Jesus and the blessed freedom I have now, I give Thee thanks and praise, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 8:1. *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

AFTER THE SPIRIT.

No condemnation: the legal charges are no longer in effect since we have been declared righteous, because we have been justified. The flesh may condemn us, the world may condemn us and the devil may condemn us; but neither the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit condemns us who have been made free from the law of sin and death. Christ has condemned sin in the flesh of His own body. Now we walk a new life, in new freedom, under the new law of life that has been imparted to us. There is new power given by the Spirit of God within, to not walk not after the flesh of our sinful unregenerate nature.

In Christ Jesus: this is not some mere profession we make that is only a statement made in the flesh. This is a union that has been formed. This is a position in which we have been placed before God. This is a bond that links us to the Person who has brought us into His kingdom. This is a work of God who has chosen us to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. This fact of being “accepted in the Beloved”, is a recognized placement of all true believers in Christ, as being a member of His body.

Who walk: no longer does the believer walk after the dark dictates of the flesh. No longer are we powerless to avoid the temptations and challenges that arise to bring us down. A new life-principle is at work now. The Holy Spirit gives power to walk a walk that pleases God. This new walk is in the “path of righteousness.” This new walk is not in darkness but “in the light as He is in the light.” This new walk is one that follows in the steps of Him who has called us to “follow Me.” This walk lifts us above the demands of the law to the acts of grace that enables us to be Christ-like.

“I am thankful Father, for the Spirit within that makes this new walk and life a practical possibility. Those things that were beyond my capacity before the Spirit of God came to indwell me, are now normal practices when the Spirit of God has His way in me. May it ever be so. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 8:5-8

THE MIND

People are divided into two groups: those who the mind of the flesh (the sinful nature) controls - and those who are controlled according to the Holy Spirit. By nature, we would all be in the first category where the physical lusts of the flesh would be our occupation, interests and desire. The "old man with his deeds" wrath, anger, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of the mouth and lies are to be "put off" when we are brought out of the dominion of sin. Those things that the mind of the flesh is attracted to, indicate that person is at enmity with God. The position and condition of such a person is that of death. The mind of the flesh is death. The disposition and direction of the mind of the flesh clearly shows that such a person is lost. Cain, Balaam, Korah and Judas are extreme examples of those whose mind is death. There are many others who for the pleasures of sin, the appeal of religion, the favor of friends or the pressure of peers have the mind of the flesh. These too are in the flesh that is enmity toward God. Nothing they can do in the flesh can please God. They have never been born again and are not "children of God by faith in Jesus Christ."

The second group of people are those who have the mind of the Spirit. When a person has accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, there is something and Some One in them that is according to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit first convicted that person of sin and brought them to the place of repentance. Then the Holy Spirit and the Word of God brought about the new birth, and the Spirit indwells the one who is born again. The mind of the Spirit brings the new life we have in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. The peace He supplies is because all enmity between us and God is gone, and we live in that peace which does not end. There is a whole new spiritual environment we live in when the Spirit of God dwells in us. The disposition of the Spirit is such that we have the desire to "put on the new man" and all the attributes that are associated with the one who loves the Lord and wants to please God. Those in the flesh cannot please God no matter

what they might do. Those with the mind of the Spirit have that life and peace within that motivates them to pray, praise, worship, read the Word of God and have fellowship with the people of God.

There are two groups of people that divide the human race.
One, have the mind of the flesh, the other the mind of life and peace.
All of us would be in the first group if Christ had not died for us.
The second group is composed of those who in Him have put their trust.

We cannot serve the mind of the flesh and live according to the Spirit.
And yet some believers try to no matter how often they hear it.
The mind of the flesh is carnal and its result is the sinful man's death.
And the Christian who tries to live that way has no lasting peace.

That one may try for some reason to be like the people around -
But finds out the Spirit leads into a life where love for Christ abounds,
It is then natural for the new one in Christ to do what the Spirit desires.
And yielded to the Spirit's guidance, that life of faith inspires.

It is a good thing to stop and ask, "What would the Lord Jesus want me to do?"
And according to the mind of the Spirit, that person wants to God to be true.
The way of the flesh will always be an enemy to the law of God within.
The one who God has redeemed, by grace has been saved from the power of sin.

Those in the flesh can't please God; those in the Spirit can.
When the mind of the Spirit brings life and peace, that person is a different man.
That person will consciously choose to center their life on God.
And never wants to follow the mind of the flesh, even if they could.

**"Father God, I have found that peace given to those whose mind is stayed on Thee.
Please keep Thy servant from allowing my mind to stray to the ways of the flesh. In
the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

ROMANS 8:9-11

IN YOU

The true child of God is one who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and acknowledges that He is Lord. When that happens the Spirit of God dwells in that person. No longer is he "in flesh" but is now "in Spirit" - a new kind of element in which he lives. This is not made known to us by a feeling or some external evidences like speaking in tongues. This is true because the Lord Jesus promised it would be so. The Spirit of God "in you" has nothing to do with our deciding to make it happen. It is a promised fact, and a person without the Holy Spirit is not a true Christian.

There are sincere, seeking people who long for God and for a knowledge of God's Word. Often, they are occupied with religious or Christian activities, but have never been willing to face the seriousness of their sins and come to Christ alone for forgiveness of sins. If they do not have the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit who Christ sent to be in the believer, they are not one of God's children. The Spirit is a real Person who allows our body to be His host body. He actually dwells in those who are saved and makes His home in every person who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ. We will experience His presence when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and know that eternal life that comes through Him. There will be a change in life to act as our Lord directs us. We will find help in daily life and prayer. The power to serve God acceptably and work toward spiritual goals will give meaning to our daily life.

Now, not only are we in Christ, but the Spirit Christ sent is in us. Even though He is in us, our body which is dead because of sin, still has a tendency to sin. In contrast to that, the Holy Spirit is life "in you" because the Spirit motivates us to righteousness in all aspects of our life. The Holy Spirit is the One who directs our life in Christ to produce what God intends for His glory.

Our bodies are still dead to God on account of sin, even though we have been bought with a price. It is our area of responsibility to honor and glorify God "in our bodies and spirits which are His." Our mortal bodies die. Our spirits have life now and forever. The day is coming when our mortal bodies shall put on immortality. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the tomb will raise us and change us. Before we were saved, we were not linked to the Risen Christ. Now that the Spirit of Christ is in us, these bodies that are subject to death, will become alive to God when "mortality is swallowed up of life." Our spirits and souls are alive to God now. Our bodies will be at the coming of the Lord.

To some it may seem very hard to grasp

That something happened in years that are past.
Inside this body I live in, once I lived all alone,
Now in this body of clay, there also lives Another One.

There is evidence in me that a significant change took place,
Right at the moment God saved me by His grace.
The things in life that held such an attraction to me,
Have been replaced by other things from which I used to flee.

Another Person is within this body using the same things
To produce whole new effects that living for the Lord Jesus brings.
Like an Administrator of God's will, He seeks to take control
And use this body in ways compatible to my spirit and soul.

The Spirit of Christ is in me and this body is dead to sin.
He guides all parts of my life from His "control-tower" within.
When I willingly yield to His will and His guidance,
There is no condemnation and guilt like a pseudo-sentence.

I know I am in Christ and am made a new creature in Him.
But this body of mine which in Christ, is dead to sin -
Still has ties that unwanted, link me to the earth,
And if I am not careful, makes me think "flesh" has some kind of worth.

But I know better than to yield to such kinds of temptation -
For "Christ in you" indicates by verbal connotation -
Not the eradication of sin in the flesh, because for that I must die,
But the negating of sin's power by the Spirit who is far greater than I.

Looking ahead, there is a day that is coming -
When mortality is swallowed up by that One who is living.
And will raise me up, not just a spirit, but then with a new body,
That then redeemed like my spirit and soul, will be able to serve God wholly.

"Eternal God, my Father, in view of the coming day of full redemption of my body as well as soul and spirit, I pray of Thee to help Thy servant today to be fully guided by Thy Spirit in deeds and words. May the Spirit be free to use me to fulfill Thy will in everything I do this day. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 8:17. *"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we may suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."*

NEW THINGS.

There are a lot of new things I have read about today -
A new duty has been given that affects me every way.
The Spirit of God is the divine Guide who will lead me -
Opening up ways that bring me into a new intimacy.

There is also a new relationship when I have a new Father -
As His child I respect His will and act as I ought to.
Now as an heir of all things I can share with my Lord -
All His blessings down here, and in the future, by His Word.

There is a glory in the future that is going to be revealed to all
Through those freed from condemnation by grace He did call.
The creation He made when He delivered us from sin -
He will fully complete in heaven what on earth He began.

At present we only have a foretaste of things yet to come.
We have received the adoption, but wait for full redemption
By looking ahead through the scriptures of truth -
A positive hope gives new freedom to bear fruit.

The Spirit of God does not leave me alone.
He helps me to pray when I have Christ on the throne
Of my life; so that when I wonder what more I should say
The Spirit of God is there filling in the gaps when I pray.

“I am very thankful, O God, for the abiding Spirit of God. It gives great confidence that in every activity of life, each decision I make, each place that I go - that the Spirit of God is there to guide and bear witness to what is of God and what is not. In praying, it is really important for me to know that He is there interceding and making acceptable what would not be if it were just me and my words. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 8:12-17

OBLIGATIONS

I must stop here to consider and review what has happened since God was willing to take up a dealing of grace with me. I have been crucified with Christ, so in Him I have died to Adam, the human head through who sin has passed on to all men resulting in death for all men. But through the sacrificial death of Christ that chain has been broken and I am alive to God in the risen Christ. When that new life began, the Holy Spirit entered to dwell in this body of mine and use these body parts as instruments of righteousness. The power of the Spirit of life has made me free from the law of sin and death. Sin has no dominion over even this body that awaits the redemption of it when the Lord comes at the Rapture of the Church.

So even though my body is still dead to God, the indwelling Spirit is the controlling factor in my life - even when it comes to the use of the body. That makes me obligated as a debtor, not to the flesh to be living, but living to God. The demands of the body are the same, but by the power of the Spirit of God, these must be reckoned dead.

As a believer I must refuse the desires of the flesh to follow the old man's ways and submit gladly to the leading of the Holy Spirit. I know that nothing of the self-life is good. The sin that self tends to follow is a terrible thing. I, by the power of the Spirit, put that in the place of death and commit to the guidance of the Spirit. This does not mean I am like a robot without the ability to make moral choices. I am accountable to God and must assume the responsibility to be led by the Spirit as a mature son. This leading is a way of living constantly and consistently - not just to do some particular work. To be one of the sons of God has a family responsibility with it that includes a reputation to uphold.

In the past people lived in fear as they sought in vain to fulfill the demands of the law. That fear held them in bondage. This is not what Christians are under. We are not in a state of fear trying to uphold a perfect standard. Though we have been born again into the family of God, we have been placed there, not as incapable babies with no ability to fulfill God's will, but as adult sons. As such we have an awareness of who we are and who God is as our Father. The Holy Spirit communicates to us in our spirit, not the intellect, that we have been born into God's family. There is something fundamental in our spirit that gives us the consciousness of spiritual light, joy and privilege to respond to God Himself. There is an inherent knowledge that we belong to Him. That knowledge is supported by the Word of God.

We know family members because of an inward work of the Holy Spirit. This is similar to a natural family of parents and children. There is a bond of nature that remains there and it cannot easily be explained. In the family of God, we find ourselves heirs of God with many others, and there is a link of love there with them when we meet. All believers have received the "divine nature" and we have a relationship with all of the children of God. Because we are children, we are heirs of God - and joint heirs with Christ!! This another great evidence of the amazing grace of God. We share God's blessings with the Eternal Son of God!!

During the brief time we have on earth, we may be called upon to suffer with Christ. Godly living and suffering go together. To avoid that suffering may sometimes be the choices of some, but there is something basic in believers that will enable them to endure the suffering and enjoy the glory with Christ. These two things go together because the first one, enduring suffering, makes us fit to reign with our glorified Lord who endured suffering and is now glorified.

There are obligations we owe to this new life.
When we became God's children the old nature lost rights
To claim my attention that I might yield to temptation,
And make me a slave again to sin's subjugation.

By the Spirit of God, we must put to an end,
The deeds of sin on which the flesh depends.
That same Holy Spirit is the One who leads
Us into paths of righteousness when to Him we give heed.

No longer cringing slaves fearing what is ahead,

This body of sin is to be reckoned dead
To sin and by the Spirit alive in Christ,
And as sons of God eternally blest.

Now by the Spirit we live and can call God, "Father."
We have been blessed in Christ and to Him we give honor
As Savior and Lord, and through Him we've been made heirs,
For we through the Spirit, the glory of Christ shares.

This is not a reason for pride, but for humility.
There is nothing in us by nature that one could ever see
That would recommend us to be one of the heirs of grace,
It is God's grace alone that gave us this privileged place.

This does not mean everything in life will always be smooth.
There is much we have gained and maybe some things to lose.
Suffering may occur and there may be a high price to pay
When we refuse to compromise or go in the world's own way.

"To them to whom much has been given, much is required."
Not as a payment for blessing received, but by love inspired,
To die to this world and live unto God each day,
And by the Spirit, "Abba Father," we have a right to say.

"Heavenly Father, to be one of Thy redeemed and an adopted son is a great blessing I know I never deserved. But I know this is a fact and for this I give Thee my heart-felt thanks. Please help me to honor and represent Thee well today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 8:19. *"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."*

EXPECTATION.

With indrawn breath, creation waits and wonders at the newness -
What causes it, where will it lead, what results will come from such change?
The sameness of the natural is showing cracks here and there -
New desires, new attitudes, new allegiance - what has happened to him?
New relationships, new guiding principles, new duties - he is not the same person!
It is like he is starting over - he looks like always, except - like he is created new!

Things we've grown so used to - seasons, tides, weather patterns - what is happening?
Creation is either changing or waiting for changes - with expectation.
The seasons are still here, but are different; less of this and more of that.
The mountains remain, but even they are changing - in form, in shape - volcanoes.
The seas are the same but are more forceful - like they are angry - like the wicked.
Earthquakes increase and all together - we wonder with anxiety - what's next?

What are we all looking for, what are we expecting - signs come from everywhere?
Is God starting over again, is there something coming, what should we expect?
After the suffering; will the glory we are looking for be seen? Is God at work again?
It is evident he is starting with mankind - the changes in new creations are real.
It seems like a countdown has started and creation starts to reveal glimpses of the future.
Is the manifestation soon to be seen? Is creation readying itself? Are new creatures real?

"To be uncertain about the future, Father God, must be very disconcerting. I know the end of the story and am anxiously awaiting the time when everything will be subject unto our Lord. But I am also anticipating how the sons of God will look when we are revealed with Him. Anxiously awaiting His arrival, I remain Yours in the grip of grace, Amen."

ROMANS 8:18-25

LOOKING AHEAD

There is a hope ahead unto which believers have been saved. Being saved is presented to us in Romans in three ways. We were saved in the past, the moment we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. That deliverance was from sin and the punishment of sin for all eternity. That was when our new life began. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." We were given eternal life then and it is ours forever because it is the life of God that we have received. At this present time, we are being saved from the power of sin. This is the process of sanctification which is on-going day by day. Even though we live in this body of death, the Holy Spirit gives power to carry on the work of our redeemed souls and spirits in bodies that are awaiting

"the redemption of the body." All of the full benefits and blessing of salvation will be ours when the Lord comes and we will be saved from the presence of sin.

Sin has caused even the creation to suffer and decay. The creation is not evolving into something better as the ages pass but is actually in a constant state of deterioration. When the people of God are revealed with Christ in His glory, there will be changes that will take place by the power of the Lord of creation. Lions will lie down with lambs. The desert will blossom and produce what the Lord intended when He created it at the beginning. All of the original plans of God at the beginning of creation will be submitted to the will of the God of creation. The "vanity," or lack of fulfillment that keeps the earth from its potential will come to an end at the liberty of "the glory of the children of God." The bondage or corruption that is everywhere now, will be released along with God's people. At present we already have the liberty of grace - ahead is the liberty of glory.

We already have the first-fruits of the Spirit that gives us a foretaste of the coming kingdom blessings. Our citizenship is in heaven and the Holy Spirit in us is our guarantee of the coming "redemption of our body." Our bodies of humiliation that are so deceptive, may tempt us to be comfortable with this complacent world. Hopefully, believers will still "groan" when we see what is around us compared to what will be when this state of hope we are in becomes a reality.

Believers look ahead with hope and trust to the change that is coming when we will be like Christ. "This corruption shall put on incorruption." "This mortal shall put on immortality." We have been blessed abundantly already in "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Then every blessing, physical and spiritual - even creation - will share in this liberty of the glory into which we will come. That hope, the expectation of something better, even though we have not seen the end result of what is ahead, works in us the grace of patience. Patience in His children seem to be something that is very important to God. This patience is not just an attitude, but is patience with a specific objective - the coming liberty of the glory of God's children when these bodies are made like unto His body of glory.

The sanctification of the Spirit is not something obscure.
It originates when condemnation is past and eternal life is secure.
It is contrasted with the flesh when it raises its ugly head,
Indicating that this body of flesh to the world is not yet dead.

The Spirit of God in spite of that, chooses to dwell within.
And He gives us motivation to never yield our members to sin.
Christ is alive in us and our spirit and soul are alive
In Him who the Spirit of God helps us fleshly lusts to deprive.

To this sanctification we have an obligation
To mortify the body's desire that leads to our temptation.
When led by the Spirit there is power to us given -
To live here on earth like citizens of heaven.

There is a heritage we have that produces sanctification.
We have a heavenly Father who made us His by the Spirit of adoption.
And that Spirit draws from our spirit a grateful response -
As heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, we are not now what we were once.

Now as we look ahead into the future there is an expectation
Of a new liberty of both God's people and of God's creation.
The creation is now in bondage because of human sin.
When the liberty of the glory of God comes, creation will be changed then.

So, we look ahead with sure hope and anticipation,
To the time there will be seen evidence of our sanctification.
The creation won't groan, and neither will we -
When we are free to live as God's children in the glory of liberty.

"Father, with anticipation I look into the future and am assured that the day is coming when this present time with disappointments and groaning will be swallowed up by glory. What glory it will be when our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed and we will be with Him. What glory when the creation fulfills Thy original plans. Desert places will produce abundant fruit. Peace will be on earth and our Savior will be honored as He should be now. I pray that I will be able to bring some glory to Him today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

ROMANS 8:26-30

HE KNOWS

There is a sense in which we are linked with the groaning creation because of our ignorance. We just don't know what to pray for at times, and even how to pray. Our need is great as we look around us and ahead into the unknown events of each day. Our very inability to express or define our requests may frustrate us and make us to despair of the value of prayer - until we understand! Within us the Holy Spirit enters into the essence of that which we cannot describe, and on our behalf addresses that great need with total understanding. Even further, He knows all the ramifications associated with our prayers, and with urgency and depth of feeling, He takes our case personally to the throne of God.

The Father, who searches our hearts and knows the Holy Spirit is groaning for a saint, knows exactly what the Spirit means when He is presenting our case according to God. We are so limited that we don't even know all that our prayer means, but the Spirit does and intercedes according to God's nature, according to our real needs, according to what is involved in the dangers or blessings of our requests and according to the results. Then we know that God knows - and we can rest in that assurance. We are sure the outcome will be for good. This does not mean that all things will make us happy, but that they will be "for good" to fulfill God's purpose. The long-range results of things may never be known by us, but we know God has a purpose for the little things and big things, seen or unseen, sweet or bitter, peaceful or adversarial. Whatever they are, we can trust God to work out of life's events, exactly what He wants.

When we are "called according to His purpose," it does not mean we have been given an invitation to participate in what God is doing. Rather, it refers to us being objects of God's will. This calling goes way back to the sovereign electing grace of God. God has an eternal purpose and we who love Him are in that realm of His will to be accomplished in us and through us. His purpose has to do with a decision God made to accomplish an objective He has. His purpose is not affected by the circumstances of life that may fall upon me or any of those He has called. He will carry through to completion what He has purposed. So we are not asked to consent to His will in this scripture. We are told what will happen through those that love God. He chose us for this, and by taking the offer of salvation presented in the Gospel, we find ourselves in the realm of His purpose.

God knew us way before we were born. He knew what we would be and do and believe. The point being that He knew the person. What would be the reaction of the person did not affect the purpose of God for that person. His method of reaching the person and putting them on the road of His purpose, was through the presentation of the Gospel. It was true that He knew us so foreordained conformity of us to the image of Christ. He saw us in the past in Christ; sees us in the present and future in Christ. With the closest possible link, we find ourselves connected to the "First-born among many brethren."

God, who had this plan in which we have a part, called us into being. When He did that, He counted us righteous, justified before Him (this is not justification by faith). He also lets us see the conclusion of this great process and purpose by assuring us that we are glorified in our connection with Christ, even though this has not yet been seen. We know this is all true because He knows this from His eternal perspective. It is an accomplished purpose that is being worked out in His people now. What a standing we have! What an assurance! What a purpose! What a future!

I know it is beyond description, but I must try anyway -
To grasp in my mind what these amazing words do say.
This is not some fantasy or far-fetched dream of a man -
But words from the Source of life describing a plan
In which I have a part to fill for His eternal glory -
That will bring to completion an event in His-own-story
And God called us in His sovereign electing grace
In this unfolding grand design of things, to have a real place.

I am limited in prayer to what I've experienced and known.
The Holy Spirit knows the whole thing, and in intercession He does groan
Because there must be an urgency that escapes my understanding.
He though, knows what is ahead and what my call is demanding.
Therefore I can rest in assurance that God is working everything for good.
I do love God, though perhaps don't express it as often as I should.
It is my desire to act according to His purpose and His will.
Hopefully what He has intended I can accomplish and fulfill.

I know I am not able to describe what is my role.
But I believe God knows I love Him with my heart and soul.

And I really long to be like Christ, what a joy to me it would be -
If people that are around me in some way Christ would see.
He is called the First-born among brethren, and I am one of them.
My desire is to cast some reflected light from Him as a testimony to men
That I am in Christ and He is mine, and they too need to come
To Christ and believe on Him, so they can become a son.

The purpose of God is not just for the future, it includes life now.
I may never know all that's involved, or what I should do or how -
But I am resting in the fact that the Holy Spirit prays for me.
And He knows the eternal purpose and what I am supposed to be.
In this case human will is not the point, nor is human consent.
God has predestined my life that to His will I am bent.
This does not cause me concern at all, it is a privilege that He did choose
Such a weak unworthy one, that I for Him my life could loose.

"Father, the whole blessing of being called by Thee escapes my understanding. But the little I can enter into gives a sense of meaning to every activity in life. Things small or great, even known or unknown have significance to me because I know this is in Thy purpose. For this day and in the gathering tonight, may I rest in confidence that all events are known by Thee and have some reason. Help this feeble servant to bring some honor to Thee and meaningful benefit to others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 8:32. *"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."*

FREELY GIVE US.

God knew before, He was not unaware; of the awful load that He must bear; in order that
He might take us there - to be with Him.
It was His only Son He gave; not sparing Him that He might save; our souls from hell
beyond the grave - that we might live.
It was His Son, there was no other; the only begotten of the Father; that in a coming day He
would gather - the elect of God.
From heaven God sent Him from His side; to earth where He might here abide; it was down
here He that lived and died - as a man.
A man He was, that is really true; even before He came, He already knew; it was necessary
that He would show - God's love to men.
By words and deeds, He made it plain; new life is there for us to obtain; it becomes ours
when we are born again - by the Holy Spirit.
The cost was high, it was the price of blood; with no remission, we could not see God;
Christ's cross-death revealed to us in God's Word - says it was for me.
God never spared His only Son; He delivered Him for me undone; By dying for me, He did
atone - for all my sins.
What Christ did bear, I will never know; but this is true, I'll not be in hell below; because His
death was for me, means I will go - to heaven above.
Grace now to me is a charming sound; it has separated me from the world around; and
allows me to send out the Gospel sound - Christ died for me.
I am free to live, for Christ has died; the claims of God are all satisfied; and now eternally I
will abide - with my Lord forever.
It is not because I deserve the least; but because God gave His dearest and best; and in His
love I safely trust - till Christ shall come.
And more beside; God has freely given; relief from guilt because I am forgiven; and deep
inside, now from all men, hidden - is the Holy Spirit.
He, who convicted me of my sin; and by His power made me born again; and has fitted me
to live in heaven - gives power to live.
I find it true, the greatest joy of earth; is to live for God since my new birth; has given a
nature that enjoys the truth - and wants to pass it on.
All things are mine because God's own Son; by His death on the cross when He died alone;
now has made me accepted and I can own - Jesus is my Lord.
When Jesus calls, and His face I see; I will thank Him then, and eternally; for all things He
purchased when He set me free - to be God's child.

"I praise Thee, O gracious God, for all that Christ is to Thee and has done for me. I am so unworthy of the burden of my sin to be borne by Him on the cross. I am, and will be for ever grateful, that Thou didst not spare Thy Son. It is true that "This silences each rising fear, and bids the hard thought disappear." I worship Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 8:31-39

GOD IS FOR US

The whole of the Gospel theme brings us to the high ground where we can see the leading of God from being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to being glorified together with Him. All of this is an accomplished fact in God's eyes because God is for us. The purpose of God is not up for speculation but we rejoice in it with a sense of gratitude and victory because God is for us. He has called us and saved us by His grace. We have died in Christ and risen in Him. The Holy Spirit is in us and Christ is at the right hand of God for us - God is for us! If God is for us, who can be against us. This is not a question but a challenge that goes out and no one can rise to it. God did not spare His Son. He gave Him that we might be redeemed - we who were nothing - "not a people, but are now the people of God." Who or what could ever meet such a challenge by the One who "delivered Him up for us all."

Now, that great salvation that has been provided for us as an unspeakable gift, in no way can be defined or described. It has been given us freely. What can be compared with the gift of His Son! God is for us in on-going blessings which He chooses to give us now and in the future. Those who God is for are confident no charge can be laid against them no matter who the foe is or how strong the enemy might be. God justifies us - He has made that pronouncement. Even further is the fact that Christ Jesus who made this all possible is raised from the dead and at God's right hand, is occupied as intercessor for us. The Holy Spirit here; the Lord Jesus there and God on His throne - these are astounding words - God is for us!

God's people have, and many still do, suffer hardships that have sorely pressed them - but God is for us. Some of them have been, and are being persecuted - but God is for us. There are those in hunger in Christ-rejecting societies and may feel abandoned by men - but God is for us. Humiliation, danger and death may come to many of the choice people of God on earth - but God is for us.

The apparent defeats of God's people by the hosts arrayed against them, are really the means God has used to bring triumphs over the hosts of hate by the power of love. In these terrible situations the elect of God are more than conquerors. A conqueror may win a victory. To be more than a conqueror indicates the love of God through suffering saints, wins the enemy himself. Many have been reached for God through the love of those they have persecuted. They have surrendered themselves to the grace of God and have been joined to the ranks of the people of God by the love of the saints that led them to faith in Jesus Christ.

On this high ground of fellowship with divine Persons, we are as close to heaven as we can get this side of death's door. The fear of death has no claim on the believer from the vantage point where he sees things through God's eyes. Life with all its tensions, difficulties and disappointments cannot interfere or separate us from God's love in Christ. Angels and authorities, for all their power and demands, cannot separate us from God's love - God is for us! Nothing that has happened or ever will: governments of men or powers of darkness, nothing in the universe around us or hell beneath us, can keep God from being for us or separate us from His love in Christ. There is nothing that has been or ever will be, that can keep God from being for us and from His unchanging love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here on this mountaintop of faith, one can see into the past before the foundation of the world, and into the brightness of the eternal future that lights up the whole future horizon. And then with a look down to where daily life is lived, we can testify to what we now realize - God is for us!

Sometimes from the shades of night we might tend to forget -
That we are here in this dying world because God isn't finished with us yet.
There are some things I will never learn when in the light of day -
One thing is there are others who have up till now not found the way.

I am thankful for the times when up on higher ground
God lets me stop awhile here and take a look around.
It is possible to see way back to where this walk began -
And see there are still many looking for the gate to the promised land.

That view keeps me with compassion for those who have not heard.
I need to look on them as lost sheep with the compassion of the Lord.
And make a point when I leave this peak to proclaim the way of salvation -
That those who want true life from God will flee from condemnation.

Coming up the mountain path I see the Lord's dear people.
Some seem confident as they climb, others are slow but all are equal
In the eyes of God who chose them and made them subjects of His love.

And wants me to encourage them to see what is up above.

From time to time I rest here to catch a second wind -
And then I hear from my Lord, "There's another place to which I send
You to speak for Me to others and pass along My Truth
That they may know I consider them to be people of highest worth."

So, with longing eyes toward the bright horizon, I move to other tasks.
And seek out those who are lost, and answer questions which some may ask.
It is my goal to find faithful men who are willing to teach others.
With strength of fellowship and truth, they will be guides of other brothers.

"Father, this seems to have been one of those mornings when heaven is very near. These words I have been meditating on have lifted my sights higher than is normal, I am kind of ashamed to say. I ask Thee, Father, to give me the wisdom to lift the spirits and hearts of Thy people tonight that they may find their joy in Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

ROMANS 9:1-5

GENUINE CONCERN

As the doctrine of the Gospel is unfolded by the Holy Spirit through the pen of the apostle Paul, there arises the question, "What about Israel? Are the Jews no longer in God's plan of things?" When God chose Israel as a special nation to be His people on earth, that was not a temporary act. Israel was God's chosen earthly nation of people and there will not be another nation that has such a privileged position. Their tendency, and actions, to go after false gods in the Old Testament times, brought on the nation divine judgment. The grace of God revealed in Christ was rejected by the nation and the Messiah for whom Israel waited, was refused and crucified. "God, who is rich in mercy" still has this nation as His special people on earth, but grace refused and Christ rejected has brought serious consequences to both individual people and Israel as a nation.

The concern of Paul for the people of which he was a part, is understandable. He is not saying he loved his nation more than he loved God. His love for his own people was genuine. His concern was so great because he could see what was happening to them as they were a grace-hating people. As a race they still wanted the Law, the temple and the forms they had developed to make them to appear holy. But this did not make Paul hate them because "the love of Christ" was constraining him to be faithful to them. He had a real Christ-like love for his own people.

Lest we become too judgmental, we can see how far removed from biblical Christianity the "Christian world" has become. Huge cathedrals, robes and vestments like Old Testament priests, forms and rituals that follow pagan practices have replaced what God intended for the Church. Now there is very little in Christendom that bears a semblance to what the New Testament teaches about the Church composed of people from every nation and culture should be.

It is important for me to remember that Israel is still God's chosen nation, His "first-born." That will not change. That nation saw the glory of God through 40 years of desert living. The glory of God was their light and safety in the night and shelter and comfort in the heat of the day. That glory was seen in the tabernacle and temple as a testimony to the presence of God with them. Even the glory of the reign of David and Solomon was a reflected glory of God.

The covenants from Abraham on were given to Israel, not to the Gentile nations of earth. Those covenants made were not abrogated and Israel will yet dwell in the promised land with their Messiah reigning in righteousness and peace. The law with its written directions for the well-being of mankind was given to Israel to keep as a steward of righteousness even for other nations. The laws that formed the basis for the social conduct of many Gentile national governments came from the Law delivered to Israel.

Religious ordinances for the tabernacle and temple service with elaborate outward forms belonged to Israel as a counter to the ungodly cultures of that day. But as far as Christians are concerned today, those forms are only elements of the type that is practiced in many religions, and have nothing to do with worshipping the Father "in spirit and in truth." Forms are only used now to control and manipulate people. The reality of the worship of God is when the minds and hearts of people are occupied with the Object of our worship, not the liturgy or pomp and show to impress men. Similarly, the promises of God to Israel that were made regarding their land weren't just matters of property ownership, but that through that nation would come salvation that

would bless people of all nations. When Christ came those promises began to reach out to the whole world through the Gospel.

"Christ, as to the flesh - who is over all" has brought the greatest of all honors to Israel. The Eternal God, the Lord God Almighty - was found in fashion as a man - a Jewish man. He is God blessed unto all the ages. He is the Father of Eternity, the God of creation, the God of our salvation who was promised to Adam and was promised through Abraham, who was born of a Jewish virgin, cared for by a Jewish carpenter, and who will some day reign over all the nations of the earth from a Jewish throne - the throne of David.

No wonder Paul was so concerned by the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by his own people. He had been faithful to them, but they had rejected his teaching. But he also knows there is a day coming when Israel will respond to the Messiah by God's great mercy.

I am not one of those who are part of God's chosen nation.
Nor am I identifiable by very many people like those of higher station.
But by God's sovereign, unfailing and supremely marvelous grace -
Accepted in Christ Jesus, I have in the kingdom of God a place.

As to what that means in the coming future, I am not quite sure.
But as a son adopted into God's family, by Spirit-power I endure
The pressures of living in this pagan and ungrateful world of men -
Without having to yield to the forces that want to pour me into the mold with them.

The place I have been given now is with those who are a kingdom of chosen priests.
Israel was supposed to be that, but because of their sin that privilege ceased.
Although they had a representative priesthood to fill that God-intended role -
They wanted to be like the world around in a way that cost the nation its soul.

Yes, there is coming a future day of world-wide blessing through that earthly nation.
And through Christ coming as one of them, and bringing the blessing of salvation.
Still there is concern for them because of their past rejection and present neglect
Of their God and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom they show very little respect.

Their history is one of suffering, persecution and of national pain.
But they have the promises and covenants - one day as a nation they will again
Gain ascendancy, though at this present time they seem to us so small -
Until Christ takes David's throne, and then to His authority all kingdoms will fall.

The concern of us who have been brought into God's family,
Is that in spite of national indifference, individuals of the nation will see
That Jesus Christ the Lord is the Savior of all who will call on Him.
And Jews and Gentiles alike come into His family as individuals - each of them.

The Jewish nation has a future, of that biblical fact there is no doubt.
We do not have a present time-table as to when this will come about.
But of greater importance is that individuals now will on Christ believe -
And no matter what nationality one is, into God's family will be placed those who Christ
receive.

"Father, I pray that I will be kept from a feeling of smug complacency because I am in Thy family. Those I know of Jewish background who are my brothers and sisters in Christ I dearly love. Help my brother who calls himself a "completed Jew" to be able to reach others with his compassion and zeal. Give power to those who are known as "Messianic Jews" to win many souls to the Savior. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 9:4-5 *"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."*

GOD BLESSED FOR EVER.

JEWISH PRIVILEGES

Adoption: God's own chosen nation from among the nations of earth, has been set apart to be His witnesses on earth.

Such privilege was theirs, but they did not understand,
Their calling of God was so high.
Instead of dwelling in peace in their land,

They wait on for Messiah so nigh.

They have been blessed with adoption as sons;
But Messiah they have so far rejected.
From the Gentiles has many other sons come;
Who have not God's salvation neglected.

Glory: they had the visible glory of God's presence in the Tabernacle and the Temple. God actually dwelled with them.

How could they miss the blessings they had;
It was visibly there to be seen.
The cloud was above and the Shekinah inside;
Glory in the camp shed its gleam.

Even today, one of the smallest of nations,
Is the center of all nations' concerns.
They have survived in spite of all tribulations,
That have fallen from wherever they turn.

Covenants: God made the covenants with Israel concerning themselves and the land He had promised them.

Covenants God made with the sincerest of intent;
He intended to bless this chosen nation.
Israel broke most, and the others they bent,
Instead they rejected divine intervention.

Covenants will cost both parties their life,
They unite two, that both might be blessed.
We outsiders are in, and Israel has strife,
The benefits of covenant they missed.

The Law: written by God on tables of stone, and the scriptures of truth themselves, contain all that God wanted Israel to know, in order for the life and purpose of the nation to be accomplished.

God removed all doubt of His intention toward them,
When there was placed in their keeping, the law.
But instead of learning from the truths it contained,
Israel copied ways from other nations they saw.

So, the law did not work like a schoolteacher should,
They rebelled against the claims that it made.
Even for us, if we ever had done the best we could,
It will condemn the best intentions we claim.

Services: the ordinances and rituals that God instituted in the religious services of the Israelites, were in sharp contrast to the false worship of the nations around.

The dignity and glory of the people of God,
In times past, was in sharp contrast to evil.
The practices were written down plain in the Word,
They still work when the requirements we fill.

For though the law isn't the way back to God,
It does still God's standards make plain.
Today, as back them, when our God is our Lord,
We will follow His pattern the same.

Promises: directly from God, came promises of blessings when Israel obediently followed His revealed will to them.

When God makes a promise, you on it can count;
It will happen, just as He said.
You act on His truth, never having a doubt,
For His words are as sure as His deeds.

He wanted Israel to be a kingdom of priests,
But they didn't His promises obey;
So, others are brought in to take the priests' place.
The Church is that kingdom today.

Christ came: The Redeemer has come through Israel, just as the prophets foretold in the scriptures. The uniqueness of His Person; the place of His birth and hundreds of other prophecies are written concerning Him who would come through Israel.

He came to His own but they received Him not;
What a tragedy Israel brought on its head.
The rejection of Christ, brought on Israel a blot,
And for that rejection the nation has bled.

But it's not over yet, a new day is coming,
When Israel, its Messiah will see.
Peace will reign, like a brand-new morning,
With Christ: Israel, and the Church, will be.

“This has seemed like a long response Father, to a few words in an obscure chapter; but I am seeking to learn the value of privileges, and the need to act on them without hesitation. I have so many, and I thank Thee for them, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 9:6-13

SOVEREIGN CHOICE

Far beyond my ability to explain or even understand, is the wonderful truth of a sovereign God forming covenants with mortal man. Israel survives even today because of those commitments God has made with them through the patriarchs. As Paul addressed the Roman believers then to whom the nation of Israel would have been of no account compared to the Roman Empire, He uses the promises of God to assure them of the promise of God's election in reaching them with the Gospel. The same is true today. Israel seems too insignificant in size and population among the nations of earth to have the impact on world affairs that it does. The nation as an entity and influence is because of the election of a Sovereign God.

The same holds true when it comes to the saving grace of God. Not all of those who came from Abraham were chosen people. His other sons and daughters were his seed, but through Divine Sovereignty, it was Isaac through whom the covenant with Abraham was to be fulfilled. The promised miracle son of Abraham was the chosen one to bear the blessings of a covenant relationship. Rebekah had twins but it was the second-born, Jacob, that God in His sovereign will chose even before they were born.

We have no reason for pride or self-centered complacency because in God's sovereign choice, He elected us to be His children and to place as sons in His family. It is important for us to remember from the example of Israel, that being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world is not a cause for pride, but humility. No one is chosen because of heritage or of good deeds they may do. God in His goodness, grace and mercy has singled us out to be recipients of His blessing. This is because of His own sovereign will, not because of any merit on our part of any kind.

God who knows the end from the beginning of every nation, every event, every family unit and every human life, has through the Gospel and by His sovereign choice, planned out that which will fulfill His divine purpose. I rest in this fact gratefully - thankful that I heard and believed the Gospel. Thankful that the Holy Spirit led me to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. Now from this vantage point as one inside the door of God's blessings in Christ, I know that I am chosen to be one of His people by His own sovereign will. I am not an afterthought nor a mistake in His family.

There is much that I do not understand and really don't need to bother -
With the fact that I am one of God's children by the will of my heavenly Father.
To be a child doesn't lie within the choice of the one to be born.
That is decided by the principle of life by which a child comes to be known.

When God in His sovereign, will designed a purpose and plan for me -
That happened long before even the creation came to be.
The blue-print of holy decision-making came from the design He made -
That would best fulfill the eternal purposes Divine Persons together had.

I am sure at first Abraham must have wondered why God had chosen him.
He was no perfect person and there was no special merit within -
But a Sovereign God chose that individual man and instilled in him the principle of faith.
As a result of that divine choosing, he left Ur for the promised place.

Isaac too was one of many who were born as Abraham's seed -
But the promised blessings to all of mankind were not based on Abraham's need.
It was the fact that God made a sovereign choice that "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

The promise of the coming Redeemer was through Isaac, bringing blessing to us all.

Jacob wasn't a special person in himself, when in the womb he was chosen.
Ultimately the nation of Israel blessed us, because through Christ, of his seed, the door
opened

To people like me when He gave His life as a ransom "in the fullness of time."
And salvation has been given by a Sovereign Lord through no efforts of mine.

By the sovereign grace of the Eternal God, I have been brought into His blessed kingdom.
And when the Gospel is proclaimed to people, it is God's sovereign choice that saves them.
Yet I cannot say some are chosen to be saved and others are chosen to be lost -
Because the method of God's choosing to save is to present to them the Gift that paid sin's
great cost.

When people are brought to face their sin, then the Holy Spirit steps in to convict -
And brings them to understand the awful consequences sin brings along with it.
Sovereign grace presents the Lord Jesus as the only Savior from sin -
The lost are found, souls are saved, when they personally trust in Him.

"Father, I am not trying to explain the unexplainable, but I am finding a special satisfaction and joy this morning in tracing Thy sovereign grace toward me. Deep in my soul today there is an excitement that considers the extent of Thy interest in me that began way in the past and brought me to faith in Christ. Now years after that happened, it is still fresh in my soul and even fresher in my daily experiences with Thee. How I would love to explain myself, but I have to leave that to the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus to explain to Thee what I really mean. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 9:14-18

GOD'S MERCY

Who really are the ones to whom God extends His mercy? Only those who are sovereignly elected to bring the promised blessing of Christ to the world? Only those who are chosen to be God's earthly nation? We must keep in mind the God we know and worship is sovereign, not arbitrary. "In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

Israel thought they were God's people because they were Abraham's seed and had to be reminded it was not natural seed alone that brought them into covenant blessings. It was because through Abraham's faith in God, and His obedience of faith that they came into the blessings God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. All of Abraham's seed included far more than Isaac, and Isaac's seed was more than Jacob. God is the Sovereign who can, and does, show compassion and mercy on anyone He chooses to. That mercy does not depend on what we will do or eventually decide to do that is the means of our salvation.

God must show mercy to us or else we would all be lost forever. Our good intentions or any efforts that we might choose to make as steps leading to make God willing to save us, does not in any way make God merciful to us. Mercy cannot be earned. God has already reached down to us by His grace to provide a means of acceptance with Him through Christ. It is of His mercy that we are not already consumed because of our sin against Him.

The hardness of the heart of Pharaoh, of the nation of Israel and of people today begins with self-sufficiency, then self-made ideas and self-satisfaction. Disobedience is usually the first step leading to hardness. Then comes the desire for wealth and prosperity that we think we deserve. Some even claim this is evidence of God's blessing on them. Discontentment and a rebellious attitude that tries to blame God for things we perceive to be bad, soon follows. Any rebuke or correction that is deserved will be rejected. Those who heard that correction, refuse to listen or pay any attention to that which goes contrary to their own will. When that happens, people fail to respond to God's grace and offered mercy with no intention of obeying God, even though they heard His voice. This hardening, leaves one unwilling and unable to obey God.

God is not the One who makes people stubborn and willfully reject Him. And because God is the God of love, does not mean He is obligated to save everyone. He is sovereign it is true but He also gives people the right to reject His mercy and He gives people the right to obey or disobey His Gospel message. He has the sovereign right to do that.

God, being God, knows how people react to His mercy. He also knows how people will respond to His will and truth proclaimed in the Gospel. We who read these words of scripture can accept with a certain reverent

attitude, the truth that God shows mercy to those who respond to His mercy. If that is rejected, that person will be hardened to divine entreaties that were once offered. These awesome words declare perhaps more clearly than others, the truth of the sovereignty of our God and the way He has displayed and extended His mercy toward us.

The depth of God's mercy can never be fathomed -
Its height goes beyond our imagination or thought.
It is not limited to those who have come to know Him -
No one can measure "what God hath wrought."

His mercy is not confined to a nation or creed.
Mercy is extended to those who on His name call.
Whenever a lost soul, or a person in need -
Turns to God in faith, His mercy will keep that one from a fall.

When one disobeys God, their heart starts to harden -
Wealth and prosperity make one harder still.
Discontent and rebellion - rejecting God's pardon -
Failing to respond to God makes hardness the heart to fill.

The Sovereign God shows mercy far beyond measure -
But when it is finally refused, He may no longer hear.
Because when His grace is spurned and is not to one a treasure -
He has the sovereign right to harden those who for Him have no fear.

"Father in heaven, there does seem to be a wide tendency of opinion to resist and reject Thy mercy. There are some, Father, who have shown recently a desire to hear Thy Word. I pray for that lady who has been so resistant, that she will again come to hear Thy Gospel tonight and respond in faith to Thy offer of mercy. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 9:19-24

WHO ART THOU?

For one to imply that he is free from the responsibility to accept God's offer of mercy and salvation, is to totally misunderstand the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. God being who He is, reads accurately what we think in our hearts. He knows "the thoughts and intents of our hearts." There are those who are fatalists and think if God has elected me then I will be saved, and if He has not, then He is responsible for me being lost. But the scriptures are plain that God "commands all men everywhere to repent." "Whosoever will may come" is God's word for us. "If any man enter in, he shall be saved," does not leave some without the opportunity to be saved. The refusal of people to respond to God's invitation is the reason they are lost. The door is open to all to come to Christ and be saved. Election is God's side of His sovereign will, working in salvation for lost sinners.

For a person to criticize God from his position of human reasoning, is the heights of arrogance. If a person seeks for some way to blame God for his hardness and rejection of God's grace, he is saying it is God's fault for not saving him. No one would or could be saved if God did not elect us, because "there is none that seeketh after God." People are lost because they are sinners and people are hardened because they are lost - not lost because they are hardened. How wrong it is for we who are created by God for His glory, to blame God for making us who we are in our sins and what we choose to be. God has formed us by His sovereign will to fulfill His purpose. It is His right to make us capable of doing what His intentions are. Any complaints we might have are a challenge made to the Almighty God and is similar to a dog howling at the moon in challenge to turn out its light.

We know God is love but He is also the Sovereign of the universe. We know God is holy and righteous, so we have no right to challenge His judgments. We know God is omniscient, so we are wrong if we complain about what happens to us or our calling in life. Rather, we should bow in reverence to Him and thank Him for making us as He chose to.

The type of vessel the Potter makes us is up to Him to choose.
Some vessels are beautiful to look at, others are vessels to use.
So, I am not going to waste time complaining one way or another.
I only hope as a vessel for Him, I can bring some visible or invisible honor.

I am not interested in being a vessel with mars, cracks or leaking seams.
God does not make mistakes in forming us that we might be useful to Him.

A vessel with self-inflicted flaws must be a disappointment to the Potter.
With a sense of calm assurance, I seek to be filled for use for my heavenly Father.

In God's great plan He chooses a man and a woman to fill a special need.
That vessel may to man's eyes be dishonorable but when to God's will I heed -
It may be the final outcome and use can bring to the Creator satisfaction -
Even though to the human view have very little use or meaningful attraction.

Some vessels may be used to hold some very special perfume.
Its fragrance may be able to be sensed in each and every room.
That use depends upon the Creator who can make a vessel that is very small -
And from that vessel comes an attraction that is a blessing to us all.

Another vessel may be out of sight, but it contains what is essential
To life itself and what it keeps safe has in it the very potential
Of survival for those who use what it holds in the way that God intends.
And though the vessel may never see the light of day, to the Potter's will it bends.

Far be it from me to pass judgments of vessels, the Potter is the One who knows
What the use of this vessel is, because the inside of it never shows.
An empty vessel may look beautiful outside, but usually there's another purpose.
And the greatest honor a vessel can have, is if the Potter Himself can use us.

"Father, this morning I am seeking to understand Thy truth and fill the vessel with the good things of God. May the thoughts I have and the truths made clearer to me, be used in these days to come for the blessing of those who can draw sustenance from this vessel. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 9:25-29

"NOT MY PEOPLE"

Both Peter and Paul quote from the same passage in the Old Testament (Hosea) making it clear that not all of the Jews will be God's people. Believing Jews - are, those who refused the Gospel when it was presented to them - are not. The Gentiles who heard the Gospel after them are brought into the blessings of God along with those few Jews who in faith believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Lord. Only a few Jews comparatively speaking, would be saved as Isaiah had prophesied. So now, better than being called the people of God (the Jews as a nation), both Jews and Gentile believers are called "children (sons) of the Living God."

Israelites are given a glimpse into the future when only a few of the population will survive to come into the blessings of the kingdom. The conclusion of God's dealing in longsuffering and grace will come quickly once that day comes. God is "longsuffering, not willing that any should perish," but when His prophetic plans are put into action, things will take place in rapid succession. The Great Tribulation will envelop the whole world in a rapid unfolding of events that will leave only a "remnant" that will be survivors.

God will intervene in His grace before the total annihilation of the human race takes place. The illustration used is of Sodom and Gomorrah as the people who are only a distant memory because of their iniquity. In His sovereign grace, God allows a remnant of Israel, and of the human race, to survive the judgment of the Tribulation. If it wasn't for God's elective mercy every single person would die during that terrible time. How grateful we should be that God has brought us into His family as children of the Living God.

Who are those people that have survived so long?
They are not of the great nations that seem so strong.
They seem different in some ways as they pass along -
They are children of the Living God!

Very few people in the past paid much attention
To those who quietly live among them without pretension.
They heard the Gospel and respond to its truth with sincere retention -
They are children of the Living God!

There are Jews among them, although only a few.
More came from Africa where they once knew
God was taking His people from among them too -
They are children of the Living God!

From Asia and Australia and all the distant isles,

There are those coming into the family, though it took awhile
For messengers to get there traveling for many miles -
Now they are children of the Living God!

They are not without difficulties even though they're children of God -
The lives they live are guided by God's living Word,
And by grace given to them they are walking with the Lord -
Because they are children of the Living God!

It is not always easy to live righteously in an ungodly world -
Seeing how loved ones and friends are into earth's cesspool hurled -
But they stand strong in faith with committed hearts like flags unfurled.
For they are children of the Living God!

“What grace Thou hast shown me, Father, in that I have been able to be linked with Thy sons and daughters. May our gatherings this day be blessed by a sense of Thy presence and power among us. May there be an uplifting of spirit and mind among us all. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 9:23-33

THERE IS STILL HOPE

- v.23. How is God going to make known what He is like?
- v.24. Can He make Himself known to any people?
- v.25. Yes, even in the Old Testament He called and loved people who were not Israelites.
- v.26. He didn't just love them, but He made them His children too.
- v.27. Only a few Jews among the whole nation that had been chosen by God, are saved.
- v.28. The Lord is settling up the account quickly.
- v.29. If the Lord hadn't been merciful to Israel that rejected Him, every one would have died.
- v.30. Were the nations that God had not chosen to be His overlooked? No, because faith is not limited to a nation or only a few people. Faith is available to all.
- v.31. The Jews thought because they had the written legal law, that made them acceptable to God. But the law of righteousness is based on faith.
- v.32. Why did the Jews miss this righteousness by faith? They depended on trusting the law instead of trusting Christ the law leads us to.
- v.33. Everywhere they looked they could have seen evidence of the Messiah who was coming, but no, they wanted it their way. Any person however, who did believe on Christ before He came, would not be confused nor would they be stumbled.

“How strange it is, O God, that there is evidence all around and particularly in Thy Word, that the blessing of God comes by faith in Thee alone - and yet the majority of people miss it. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that the darkness may be lifted off the eyes of the people and they will turn in faith alone unto Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 9:30-33

NOT BE ASHAMED

It may seem to some people unfair that Gentiles who were, and many still are, idolaters and those who weren't even interested in righteousness, are ones that God in sovereign electing grace saves. The Israelites who were pursuing the law earnestly to become righteous have not succeeded in attaining God's salvation. The problem was the Jews were pursuing the law and were seeking to attain a righteous standing before God by their own self-efforts and couldn't rise to the standards of the law. Their object of trust was themselves, and when Christ came, instead of repenting of their sin and failure, and turning to Christ and trusting Him, they turned on Him and killed Him.

The One they stumbled over was the One who was promised in the Garden of Eden. He was the Promised One to Abraham, David and all the people of faith who looked beyond the law to Him - the Messiah. It was actually in Zion where He laid the basis of our faith. The Rock of offence the Jews stumbled over, is the Chief Corner Stone to the Church.

To seek the righteousness of God by works is a form of an insult. The sin-polluted works of men, only serve to make the free gift of God's salvation by grace, seem of lesser value by those who hold to that "Jesus plus ---" teaching. The Jews would not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ because He didn't meet their expectations of the One coming as the conquering King. Even today some people expect God to simply

overlook their sin and accept them as they are. Others think they can manipulate God into accepting them because of who they are or what they do. Any who refuse to humble themselves and put their faith in Christ alone will be put to shame.

it is important that we accept the truth of God's electing grace. No one will ever meet the standard of perfection for salvation. Meeting the demands of holiness, the law gives, is impossible by our efforts. We have to believe, through the understanding given by the preaching of the Gospel, that Christ is the Savior of sinners and any person who trusts in Him will not be put to shame.

We are by nature, lost because of sin and as guilty sinners, cannot save ourselves from being children of wrath. Because we are of the world, God had to make His move to us, which He graciously did. In mercy and love, He presented us with His great salvation - full and free to "whosoever will may come." His desire is that "all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." His offer of salvation still holds true, and we can invite all who hear the Gospel to come to Him and be saved.

God does not compromise His holiness and righteousness because that would be inconsistent with His nature. But in grace and love, His mercy reaches to us with forgiveness through Christ. Salvation is not because of any works we may do but is all of God Himself. These parallel truths make our acceptance with God possible.

There are some things I cannot explain or define.
But I know they are real because they are personally mine.
What makes "life" to be "life indeed" is to me a real fact.
The promise that brings it about is not by some human act.
Its Source is not in man; it is in God alone.
And I know what it is when I see it in many forms.
It is real I know because the evidence of life I can see.
I just can't explain all about it, and how it came to be.

When it comes to election and God's saving grace -
These parallel truths, I gladly accept for myself by faith.
I know God saves people by His own sovereign choice -
And I know people are responsible to hear and obey His voice
Being proclaimed in the Gospel so that all men can choose
Life, and not blame God if their own soul they will loose -
For God's offer goes out to each one called "whosoever-"
The simple faith that is needed forms a tie that nothing can sever.

Whether a Jew or Gentile, a Christian's child or a pagan -
God is not limiting His atonement to actions which are taken
By people to make themselves acceptable to God -
Because it is made plain to us according to His Word,
God in sovereign grace chose to allow all to come
And put their faith alone in God's only begotten Son.
Looking back, I can understand the fact that by His choice God knew -
Those who trust Christ personally would be those He did choose.

"I know Father, the blessings of Thy electing grace, and I know the blessings of putting my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ myself. Even though I may not be able to tell others of the compatibility of electing grace and human responsibility in a way they can grasp, I can let them know the rest and contentment that I have because of these two truths working in my life. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

ROMANS 10:1-5

THE END

Since the time of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, Israelites have been seeking to justify themselves by keeping those demands in order to establish their own righteousness before God. They misused it by claiming, in essence, it to be a rule of life, missing the whole point of it. It was given to plainly reveal sin. In the zeal of many then, and some today, they have missed its real purpose. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." People then and now are way underestimating the holiness and righteousness of God. They have a faint grasp of what righteousness is in their own eyes, and miss the perfection and absolute holiness of God that the law demands. If we could even conceive in our minds some way what the unsullied light of Divine Persons is, we would never raise our heads or open our eyes.

Jews were very zealous in the past of fulfilling their own conception of the law's demands even to the point of dying for their convictions. That which was given to them was a temporary means of making them face, as a people, the problem of their own sin which their privileged position did not deal with. It condemned them to death so that the honest seeker would turn to God alone for righteousness and acceptance. They needed the new birth the Holy Spirit gives when they would learn "it is God that justifies."

When Christ came, "born under the law to redeem us (Jews) who were under the law," He himself took the place of the law. The law made its statements, but the Lord Jesus Christ clarified them when He said, "But I say unto you..." as He told the nation of His people when He fulfilled the law's demands. Christ is our righteousness - not the law nor our efforts to keep it. He brought the law to its conclusion, even for the Jews to whom it was given. The law has no more meaning or purpose now that Christ has died, been buried and risen again. The law revealed sin. Now Christ reveals not only the true reality of sin but the terrible consequences of sin in His death. The law warned of consequences; the death of Christ put those consequences right out in plain sight so the people could see that God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "The flames of hell" got hold of Him. Many other descriptions are given as to the results of sin. However, when a repentant sinner sees what Christ has done, and as a guilty sinner appreciates the fact that "Christ died for our sins," then the fullness of Christ's sacrifice makes the law seem pale and of no value - which is true.

The Law is finished. People knew they were sinners before the law was given. There were many generations of Abraham's seed who lived and died before the law was given who knew the consequences of sin, let alone what sin is. The giving of the law in the wilderness, didn't make the law. That was given so the nation would see that God was gracious and merciful toward them as a chosen people. Once Christ came and died on the cross for sin, the law of commandments and ordinances was finished, even for the Jews. His death, burial and resurrection marked the end of the law for righteousness. The standard now is the perfections of Christ Himself to which we can never attain to in the flesh. But because "Christ died for our sins" He is able to, and wants to, bless us with His own righteousness as a gift of His grace. The law that came alongside, has no living, vital life like we have been given in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit within and guiding us makes the law-principle of no value to guide the Jews, much less we Gentiles who were outside the law.

It was given by God to a discontented group of people who were slaves.
And by clarifying words unmistakable, the commands of God He gave -
Which were broken even before from the mountain Moses descended -
Many generations later, as the result of Christ's death, the law's purpose was ended.

The standard of holiness we can see is the perfections of Christ Himself.
The law fades into insignificance before Him, in essence it is put on a shelf.
There is a consciousness of sin no doubt, when the words of the law we read.
But the reality of sin and its consequences come clear when to Christ we give heed.

His life was perfect, His death was the cost that we might be righteous in Him.
The law perhaps made us conscious of the problem, but couldn't bring an end to sin.
Now in the risen and glorified Lord, we are able before God to live -
Not because of the law in any way, but because of the life our Lord was willing to give.

To try and do what God has already done is a kind of great insult.
That would indicate that in some way, Christ's death didn't bring the desired result.
Christ has brought an end to the law; God's righteousness is given only through Him.
Those who in faith trust Him alone, are those God saves from their sin.

"Father, with unreserved trust in the work of Christ alone, I find myself blessed indeed without any fear of breaking Thy law given to the Jews. May the Jews who are still in blindness seek the Lord Jesus Christ, and may the time when there is peace in Jerusalem soon come. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 10:8. *"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith, which we preach;"*

THE WORD OF FAITH.

Closer than you realize are the real words of God,
Not just near the others but within the sphere of thought.
Close enough that no matter what, they can not be avoided
Close enough that the truth contained is where it can be heeded.

When it's in the mouth, it simply means that you will say the words.
When they're read or when they're said, they are the words of God.
Expressed by lips and voice, these words leave us no excuse,
For anyone to say that they haven't heard the word of faith.

The mind absorbs more than we think it does, because the word of faith;
Will rise at times to convict our hearts, of what we do or say.
It is hidden deep inside the heart of every human being,
It speaks to us when the Spirit moves, revealing things unseen.

The words we preach are not unknown, they are impressed in every one.
It reaches to the heart and mind, when situations come
That God the Holy Spirit uses when there is truth we need to heed;
The word of faith is there to speak, and rises to every need.

It is not confined in someplace far where it is hard to reach;
It is right near us whenever one the word of faith does preach.
And even when there is no voice to express what God wants said;
The word of faith is inside us to reveal what lies ahead.

“Father in heaven, I am thankful for the precepts of Thy word that are inside me as well as the clear unfolding of truth that is contained in the scripture. Help me this day to pay heed to the word of faith that I hear. Then the word of faith that I preach will not be something I have not experienced. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 10:5-10

THE WORD

As I consider the impact of the Gospel on the Jews as a people chosen by God who wanted them to be a kingdom of priests, I wondered why the law which condemned them, had such a hold on them. They knew they were incapable of keeping it to the letter. They knew it did not give them life. It seems like there is something in us, that no matter how plainly a matter is explained to us, we want "to feel good about ourselves" and "do things our way." The purpose of the law, even laws made by men for that matter, is to let people know what is right and wrong and to warn them of the consequences of wrong choices. Knowing what we are capable of within ourselves, the law is a warning of judgment that follows sin. By giving the Jews a written law that made clear who they really were, God had given them a special method to look in faith to the coming Messiah, so they would put their faith in Him, not in themselves.

But they got sidetracked by their own ideas of the holiness of God and what kind of worship they wanted. The Holy God who gave evidence of Himself in lightning, thunder and earthquake, followed by the giving of the law on tables of stone, impressed them with the holiness of the law, not the purpose of the law. Instead of the words written on the stone, they paid attention to the signs. They wanted the same evidence of signs from the Lord Jesus when He was here to prove He was the Christ. The only one He gave was the sign of Jonah: the death, burial and resurrection of Christ proclaimed in the Gospel. They were wanting another person like Moses to go up to God and then bring Christ down with him. They wouldn't accept the fact that the Lord Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, already here in the flesh, to save them.

The quotation Paul uses to emphasize "the word" is from Moses himself in his final state of the nation address. Moses made the point to those who were using the law almost like a national "good luck" charm, that the written word of the law was always near each one of them, in their mouth and in their heart to point them to Christ. The answer to their questions is right where it always has been - "the word is nigh thee." Any Jew who would confess Jesus to be his or her Lord publicly, and would personally believe God has raised Him from the dead - would be saved.

The deity and authority of Christ, even over death, was the important thing for a Jew to confess. They would have known of the "miracle worker" from Nazareth, but more than that was needed to show evidence of saving faith. This is true also of us all, but to the Jews it drew a line between them and the law, and put them on the side of the faith-principle God had always wanted from them. Jews knew the way of righteousness through the law - the word was near them. Now they had to make confession of Jesus as Lord, as to salvation.

The Gospel preached to the Gentiles goes directly from being awakened to, and repentance of, sin - to the sacrifice of Christ for our sin - the Gospel message. The Jews were asked by Christ Himself to confess Him publicly before men and He would confess them before the angels in heaven. The Holy Spirit in these verses makes the same point for them now. Confession with the mouth follows the exercise of faith by those who are elected by God.

There is a difference of a little sort between the Gentile and the Jew.
Gentiles lived in a darkened state, but by the law the Jews knew
God had a plan ahead for them that through them as a chosen nation -
The Christ, their promised Messiah would come bringing God's salvation.

When one is justified by faith, they have come to understand
The written word of the law was given to show the condemnation of man,
Who by nature wants things done his way giving him a sense of satisfaction;
Not willing to accept that faith is what justifies, not by his works or actions.

But now in a public proclamation of faith personally in Christ alone -
The one who confesses Jesus as Lord, admits it is not what he has done.
Through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as the way to be justified -
We live eternally accepted by God, based on the fact that for us Christ has died.

Now justified by faith alone, we live in freedom without condemnation.
The result of what He has done, is that He gives us freely His full salvation.
Saved from sin, and death, and hell; saved to be forever in heaven.
Saved from the power of sin in this life; justified completely by His grace that is given.

"Father, I have been greatly refreshed this morning by thoughts of being saved, justified and forgiven. I praise Thee for the blessing of Thy written Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 10:15-21.

ENDS OF THE WORLD.

The scope of the Gospel is the ends of the earth
But Israel would not accept that fact -
That God reaches out in grace to every man,
Who is willing to hear and by faith to act.

God has arranged there are those to preach -
Taking His Gospel far and near.
Many will hear but will not receive
Even though the Gospel is made very clear.

Those who preach must keep moving on
Because the glad tidings need to be told.
Some who are privileged will not believe -
Others believe who live at the far ends of the world.

Israel would not take advantage of their place -
God reaches out to those hardly aware of their need.
They receive the report the Jews ignored -
Even today God is working where people heed.

No nation is excluded - no race or creed -
Christ can be preached confidently to every man.
Everyone who values what Christ has done
Will be accepted by His outstretched hand.

"I am glad, O Heavenly Father, that Thou hast included us who are Gentiles in the blessings of the Gospel. We had no claim of any kind on Thy grace, yet Thou hast shown it to us exceedingly. As we take this message to others here, and each place to which we are led, may we go in the spirit and power of the Gospel message itself and may it be used by Thee to bless and save souls. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 10:11-15

WHOSOEVER

The idea some promote is that there is no way I have any responsibility when it comes to being justified by faith. They would teach some are elected to be saved and some are going to be lost because God did not choose them. Therefore, God has to take all the blessing or blame as to whether one is saved or lost. There is a quotation from the Old Testament the Spirit of God puts in place here as He applies the truth of the Gospel message - "Whosoever believeth on Him..." To the Jews, they would have known that meant the

Messiah was coming. Now it is used referring to Jesus as Lord. These simple powerful verses remove all excuse from any Jew as to who Jesus is and as to what God expected from them.

God's salvation is put right out in the open as being available to "whosoever" without exception. The person who listens to the word of the Gospel, no matter who they are, will find that He is "Lord of all," and He is "rich unto all" who call upon Him in faith. That person is promised salvation by the Lord Himself who saves them now. There is authority in His name and the offer of salvation goes out to "whosoever" - to anyone who calls on Him. This saving message is to those who hear of salvation provided by the death of Christ on the cross and who will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and the finished work of salvation. Nothing is added. It is to "whosoever" hears and believes. The Jews had to learn this the same as the Gentiles.

Those who declare the Gospel are to bring good news and have a message that both Jews and Gentiles have to hear. Preachers are not free-lancing people, who can say whatever they want. They are sent by God, with God's message, to people God is going to save - and they can plainly say to the listeners, "Whosoever will may come and take the water of life freely." The "good tidings" they preach is the "Gospel of peace." The law brought fear; the Gospel brings peace. The law brought the wrath of holy justice; the Gospel brings the good things of God and the joy that accompanies them.

The Gospel may not seem at first to people to be very good news,
For without question it will condemn those who their own way will choose.
However, when some stop to face their sin it will make them to consider,
There are consequences when refusing the Gospel that will fall on "whosoever."

On the other hand, when people take time to listen, they will learn a wonderful truth.
Salvation is freely offered to "whosoever" when they grasp the worth
Of a soul and the length of eternity and what Christ has done for them,
That they can be justified freely by God's grace when faith is placed in Him.

"Whosoever believeth on Him," is when we learn the value of the message.
Those who preach the Gospel of peace need to have burned on their soul this passage
Of scripture that tells us "Whosoever believeth on Him hath everlasting life."
And that sheds on the dark soul of the repentant person, believing God leads to light.

"Whosoever" is a wonderful word that includes every man, woman and child.
It also means God is not respecter of persons, though all by sin have been defiled.
His grace is greater than all our sin, Christ's blood for all has been shed.
Those who put their faith in Him, are trusting in One who God has raised from among the
dead.

"Whosoever" is also a fearful word for those who choose to despise God's grace.
"Whosoever was not found written in the book," will not be hidden from God's holy face.
There is a sense in which a person now will wish they had never been born,
If they deliberately reject the Savior of sinners, and His grace they refuse with scorn.

The blessing of the Gospel is that "Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord;"
And God in mercy gives to "whosoever," the written assurance of His Word.
To be saved is an offer to "whosoever;" the blessing from Him that is forever.
God's grace is abundantly supplied to save without any human endeavor.

"Father in heaven, I thank Thee for the simplicity of Thy salvation. May our time in this place give these isolated believers a sense of the value of what they have done and in whom they have believed - as well as who they are. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 10:16-21

REFUSAL!

The Gospel with all its glory and unspeakable, unlimited blessings, is proclaimed - but refused! How can people who have been so blessed as to have received the written Word of God, disobey and ignore such a glorious message? They listen to, and are affected by, much lesser reports every day. There are weather reports, news reports, stock market reports - reports of many kinds that are heard and paid attention to. This report that brings the greatest possible blessing one could ever have, is to be received in the same way - by faith. This news comes from the highest possible source - the Word of God.

This message is "the word of faith which we preach." This is declared so that those who hear it will receive eternal life. When it is heard with the hearing of faith, those people who heed the message are saved. It is

heard world-wide. Israel heard and refused. The message from God is heard in the voice of creation; is heard in the "goodness of God" that leads to repentance. The voice of God is sounded in the conscience of every person. It can be seen when the saints gather to "show the Lord's death till He come." It can be seen in the "chaste conversation (manner of life)" of those who in silent modesty, live the Christian life before those who watch them. It is heard in "dreams... visions... and strong pain upon the bed." Every person has heard the voice of God in some way.

Israel heard, and Israel knew the voice of God. But they thought the way of their choosing, and the law they were given, made them acceptable to God. Now people all over the earth who had no understanding of God, are sought out by God through His Gospel. God through Christ, "has come to seek and to save that which was lost." The Creator is seeking the creature. The hands of God were open to Israel, and they refused.

How important it is in this blessed day of grace, for us to respond to the divine entreaties that are presented in the Gospel message. How long will God hold His hands out to those who ignore His grace? How long will this day of invitation and seeking by God continue? It has already been a long day, and still disobedient and self-opinionated people reject and refuse Him. Some of those who respond and accept the Savior are those who have not sought God but have been sought out by Him and accepted the truth of their guilt and inability to be righteous in themselves. When they hear that Christ bore their sins on the cross and died for them - when they hear of His resurrection and ascension into glory - they believe and are saved. The privileged ones still refuse.

Can it be that men refuse God's freely offered grace?
Is it possible that privileged people living in this privileged place,
Will ignore, yea further, turn away deliberately from divine hands
Stretched out in gracious, patient entreaty to fallen man?

Can it be that self-centered interests lead people to ignore
The mercy extended, the holy and divine forgiveness provided when Christ bore
Our sins in His own body when He suffered on the tree?
How can such refusal of God's offered blessings ever be?

Can it be possible that disobedient, self-opinionated men think themselves superior
To the Almighty, Eternal, Creator-God who stoops in grace to those inferior?
And is it even common sense to think their opinions will change God's mind?
Is it possible that the sinful life and darkened intellect can make a man so blind?

Can it really come to pass that those who were called first will be last?
Will those who had no knowledge of God at all, enter the kingdom before those who fast?
Those who didn't know of the way of salvation and had nothing at all to bring -
Will they be the ones who raise happy voices and their praises to God will sing?

Can the final results of those who gather forever in the house of the Lord;
Be based entirely on the work of Christ revealed to them in the written Word?
Most certainly! For what the scriptures teach and what we believe by faith -
Is the Gospel of good tidings telling of the blessings of God's redeeming grace!

"Father, I did not do well last night in presenting the importance of faith in the life of believers. Would it be in Thy will for me to repeat some of that and go a little further with that subject, or should I speak of something entirely different. I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 11:1-6

A REMNANT

I understand the need for the Spirit of God to clarify the position of His chosen earthly people the Jews, because I am a Gentile, and we might think we are the only ones God is saving. It would seem like the Israelis have turned almost agnostic because of all that has happened to them as a people. There are some Jews who still try to keep the law as a means of acceptance by God. Others have added Jewish traditions to their efforts to be brought into the blessing of God's favor as a people.

It is only in my lifetime they have again become a nation separate from all the other nations on earth. So, were all the Jews of the "Diaspora" hopelessly lost without any access to God? No! Among that nation, the same as in all nations, "he that feareth him (God) and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Any individual who responds to the grace of God and puts their personal faith in Christ alone for salvation is

accepted by God when they are born again. Thousands of Jews, "a remnant," have been, and are being saved in various places today, by grace. They have been chosen by God's sovereign grace.

These people do not stand out in the nation and have not been known specifically as Jews because God had called both Jews and Gentiles to be "one new man" - the body of believers in which we are "neither Jews nor Gentiles, but the Church of God." They are saved through faith in Christ, not because of nationality or religion. No one is saved because they deserve it. We cannot earn salvation in any way; we are saved by grace alone. Whether one is part of the remnant of the Jews or is a Gentile; all are without any claim on the mercy and grace of God. When God in sovereign grace brings us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, all we can do is accept that salvation by grace with our thankfulness and praise to God. Grace and works do not mix in any way when it comes to the salvation that is declared in the Gospel.

The reason for grace cannot be explained -
God's grace defies full description.
There are no barriers that grace can contain -
God's character is the place of its conception.
But we can, and have, experienced the blessing
Of God's grace being shown to man.
The words of the Gospel are God's way of expressing
All the good that comes to us from His hand.

Every "good and perfect gift" is to us given
That we might appreciate His grace.
From the smallest benefit to Christ's side that was riven,
We experience grace and its pathway trace.
In grace the Father sent the Son,
To be the Savior of the world.
The grace of Christ was plainly shown,
Under the banner of love unfurled.

The grace of God in many ways
Is shown to us each day.
When we understand what God's Word says,
And the price He had to pay
To redeem us to Himself and keep
Us by His grace, then we see the works of man
Cannot avail us as we seek
To do the best we can.

Jews and Gentiles, all mankind together,
Cannot add anything to God's free grace.
Not one part of our most earnest endeavor
Can take the place of simple faith.
We may never know all the far-reaching effects
Of grace, because in the ages to come,
God will be unfolding far more aspects
Of His grace than He has already done.

"Father, I spent the weekend with a lot of people whom Thou hast saved by Thy grace. What joy and consolation there is when such a "remnant" in this world come together! How much more will there be when together we will show "the exceeding riches" of Thy grace. I praise Thee for such divine favor, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 11:7-10

HARDNESS

How sad it is when there is an earnest search for what is right, but one insists it must be reached on their own terms and in their own way. Israel did this as a nation. They were seeking righteousness but did not get it because of stubbornness. God removed from them the ability to see and hear spiritual truths from God. Because they refused to repent at the call of God, they were unable to repent as the consequence of their rebellion.

Spiritual hardness is often seen in individuals, but it was seen nationally in Israel. It happens when people of special privilege trust in themselves and that position, rather than in God who gives it. To resist God and His free grace is like telling Him to leave you alone. In the case of Israel, He did. He left them alone. Similarly, in the people of privilege today, when they trust in themselves and their position rather than God who gave

them the blessing of life itself and the "table" of privilege, they too will be hardened and unable to understand the Gospel. This appears to be happening in our country and to us as a nation. The very "table" of our blessing is becoming a snare to us as a people.

Israel turned away as a nation from their "table" of privilege and what was a blessing to them became a snare. There are "tables" today that were intended to be of special benefit to the saints of God that have misled people. To many professing Christians, the Lord's Supper has been misrepresented and has become a snare to them. The example of what happened to Israel when they insisted on the law and their traditions to be the means of pleasing God, instead of recognizing the grace of God to them when He sent His Son to be their Savior, is happening today to those who claim to be Christians by their own works and ways. The darkness and hardness of Israel is still on-going and will be until the Great King sits on David's throne. "Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" is the way individual Jews and Gentiles can avoid that soul-damning hardness.

The bitterness is real, but why is it rooted so deep?
Is it because God gave laws impossible to keep -
To keep us away from hope and life and love?
No! Those laws were given that we might repent and look to God above.

The point of law is not that we might fulfill each one and then will be
Perfect in our own strength and from our sin be free.
It is to show us what is wrong and through it, what is right.
And as a result of facing guilt, turn to Him who is Life and Light.

But stubbornness has set in, and men become their own idol.
Idolatry and rebellion have left men in a position that is fatal.
To say to God, "Leave me alone," puts one in the awful position
Of being hardened by God Himself and consigned to eternal perdition.

God does offer grace to every man like He did to His chosen nation.
But grace refused and walked away from leaves one under condemnation.
What could have been a blessing turns out a stumbling block.
And hardness closes the door of grace when one is not willing to knock.

A lesson to learn is this, never refuse God's way -
The grace of God and faith in Christ is what the scriptures say
Is the only way of acceptance, because there is no sin-polluted stain
That comes from the sinful mind of men who have never been born again.

Hardness can be seen in some facial features when the Gospel truth is preached.
It is also evident in "body-language" when "by grace alone we're saved" we teach.
The set of the jaw, the physical stance all advertise the fact
One who wants his own way, will not in faith only act.

The hardness of the heart of Pharaoh came when he his way did choose.
And after that God hardened him when he wanted to keep the Jews
As permanent slaves to do his will even though they were God's chosen nation.
His hardened heart led him and all his people into condemnation.

How grievous it must be to God when men even here today
Pay no attention to God and His will in all they do and say.
When they do that, all He can do is to let them to their own will agree;
Even though the consequences are that they will be lost eternally.

"Father," I looked at those hard-hearted Christians' children and wondered at Thy grace. How different was the expressions on the faces of those who were seekers and saints! O be merciful to them, Father, and have them to hear the Gospel again. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 11:11-16

BLESSING FROM FAILURE

Even though Israel as a nation stumbled and fell, there has been an on-going blessing to the world that came through them. Gentiles do not have to become Jewish proselytes to come into the favor and blessings of God. Those who are not from God's chosen earthly people are able to come into the Church which is the Body of Christ, along with Jews who individually confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The Church is composed of people, both Jews and Gentiles, who are equals in God's heavenly kingdom.

Gentile believers should not consider themselves superior in any way because Israel stumbled and rejected Christ. Israel has to suffer the consequences of that action of not receiving Him. It is not as "a people" but as one of the "whosoever will may come" group, that we are placed and accepted in Christ. There is no reason to look down on, or in any way despise those who are in the kingdom of God. We have all been brought into this unified Body by God's grace alone. May we never look down on anyone in the Body of Christ because we think we have a place of special privilege. All of us are "accepted in the Beloved," and that is our only way of acceptance by God.

The first ones to be accepted by God were before Israel was even called. We all go back to the root of faith alone upon which the promises of God are given. Through Abraham came the promises of One who would bless the world. From that family of Israel, the blessing of being saved by grace and placed into the Church of God has come to the believing people of all nations. Far be it from any of us who are saints of God to think ourselves superior to any other of God's people today.

We didn't have a claim on all the promises of God.
It wasn't to us who are Gentiles that has come our blessed Lord.
Israel in unbelief turned away, His offered grace rejected.
Now blessing from that rooted Source is offered without exception.

History records the story of God chosen earthly people.
Tragedy has followed them in sequel after sequel.
But from that despised nation came blessings, many yet untold.
The eternal ages will testify that God's works of grace will unfold.

Though Israel stumbled and fell, there came blessings that remain.
Salvation is offered in the Gospel to everyone in Jesus' name.
He from the tribe of Judah brought blessing to all men.
As the King eternal there will be a glorious kingdom-reign.

It never would be wise to think, we are better than they
Who are a chosen earthly people, who from God's will did stray.
Through them there came the promises, the apostles came from them.
It is on that foundation laid, that our blessings did begin.

Now we are living stones are built upon that base.
Through those chosen people has come the words of faith.
In the Church God is building, none is superior to the others.
Not just innate stones we are, but a family of sisters and brothers.

No one is greater than others, as body-members we are one.
What we have in common is we are all accepted in God's Son.
There is no place in the Body for arrogance or pride.
All of us are branches in the Vine as we in Christ abide.

"Father, this morning I am scanning across the whole of this age and am impressed with the greatness of the Body into which I have been placed as a living stone. I see the perfections of the Chief Corner Stone. Then there appears the foundation of those Jewish apostles and prophets. On top of them is the whole building of fitted, living, praising, serving stones forming a dwelling place for God. What glory, what honor, what grace to think that I am a part of that great company! Hallelujah! Amen."

ROMANS 11:13-24

BLESSING FROM REJECTION.

Paul speaks personally to the Gentiles to remind them even though the Jews rejected Christ, God only for a time has rejected them. He intends a time of Israel's restoration. We are brought into the blessings of God's grace because through Israel came promises and the fulfillment of them when the Lord Jesus Christ came. He is the Root of David. The "olive tree" has its root in God Himself.

Some of the tree has been broken off it is true. But the blessing to us Gentiles is that like a branch from another tree of a similar kind, a wild olive tree, a branch can be grafted, so we who are Gentiles can be grafted into the tree of our Lord Jesus Christ and get our new life from God through Him who is a Jew. Our life as a branch depends on the blessing that came first to Israel.

We should never, therefore, despise or overlook the Jews as being finished with God or God being finished with them. He is going to put new life back into Israel when He grafts them back into the tree and they will again be fruitful to God. I must never look down on their failure but I must be careful that I do not fail, because He can cut off anyone who is not fruitful if He chooses.

“O Righteous God, I am thankful for the nation Thou did choose from among the nations of earth to bring Thy blessing to us all. We had no claim on Thee but by Thy sovereign grace we who were “no people” are now the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. I do not forget the fact that through Thy earthly people the Lord Jesus Christ came and brought the blessing of eternal life to all who believe. Thanks so much for not forsaking me and for not totally forsaking Israel. May the day soon come when the Lord sits on the throne of David and the glory of God is seen all across the earth coming from that small place on the world’s center. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 11:17-24

GOODNESS AND SERVERITY

At this present time when God is calling out from all the people of the world, "a people for His name," His goodness is reaching way beyond Israel to those "whosoever" in the world who will come as guilty and lost sinners to Christ for salvation. All such people find their new life of faith coming from Him who as the Son of God, came in the flesh from the seed of Abraham. We who are Gentiles find the Source of our new life from that Root. So even though Israel nationally refused to accept the Lord Jesus as the Christ, many of them as individuals are branches in the root of Abraham. These "natural branches" (Jews) along with the "wild" (Gentile) branches have both been grafted into the One who is from the root stock of Israel. For we who are Gentiles to think we have a more favored place than believing Jews, puts us in danger ourselves. Any people who show hatred or reject God's earthly people, is in jeopardy of being cut off themselves. Whenever our nation has not backed up Israel, it seems like we are attacked by the very forces of nature in devastating tornados, hurricanes, floods and fires.

How much more careful should those of us who have been given eternal life in Christ, be when it comes to our attitude towards those from Israel. At this time of God's dealings with mankind, He is calling out a people to bear His name as a bride does that of her husband. God is making of both believing Gentiles and believing Jews, "one new man." In this there is neither Jew nor Gentile, "but Church of God." Israel as a nation is at present in unbelief, even though they have become a nation. They won't be "grafted" back as a nation until the Lord Jesus reigns supreme on earth. Israel still has some terrible times coming during the Tribulation, "the time of Jacob's trouble."

The "wild" branch is in danger of being broken off now because of the rejection by Christendom to the truth of God's Word and will. The Gentiles have also resisted and rebelled against God and have designed their own ways of religious activity that is totally foreign to God's revealed will. God has been good to the Gentiles and during the "times of the Gentiles" millions have been brought by God's grace, along with believing Jews into the blessing of being a "kingdom of priests."

But something terrible and of lasting consequence has happened. Gentiles have gone about to establish their own righteousness, following the same path as Israel took. Gentiles have formed their own styles of priesthood and the "doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" is rampant all over Christendom. Great religious buildings have been built to "point people to God" rather than listen to what God has said in His Word. The "wild" branch is in great danger of being cut off, for God will not tolerate men, no matter who they are, rejecting His Son. Israel is in blindness presently it is true. But it seems like the "fullness of the Gentiles" in this day of grace, is about finished.

This day of grace when men are called
From every nation, culture and tribe -
Will soon be past it seems to me -
For men not longer in Christ will abide.
They have chosen a way that to them seems right,
Not concerned what God Himself does say.
There is crossing all over the world, the dark of night,
As Christendom itself chooses another way.

There are a few comparatively speaking -
Who still have ears opened to God's voice.
They have resisted the way others are taking -
And are making God's will their personal choice.

You can find them still working among the world of men
But they are often ignored, mocked and despised.
Because into the ways of professing "Christians" they will not blend -
Seeing the deception that is obvious when its claims they apprise.

The lessons from the past are written in God's Word,
So that we will not do what Israel has done.
When men refuse to own Jesus as Lord -
The example is there to see how the chosen people have gone.
They decided to be like all the idol-worshipping nations around,
And lost the blessings and power of God.
If we also listen to the popular temptations that abound,
We will soon compromise the truth of God's Word.

What can we do and what can we say;
To stop the tendency to fall away?
We must commit ourselves every day
To remain faithful to what God in His Word does say.
And when called on to be like the others and share
In the "celebrations" they substitute for the Word of the Lord
Clearly stated to them, it is the Lord's own name we bear -
And we have chosen by God's grace to separate from the world.

"Father in heaven, I am not sure when we should leave here and travel west. It seemed right to not travel in the storm. If it would please Thee, make plain to Thy servant when we should start this journey and be in the current of Thy will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 11:26-32

GOD HAS A PLAN

There is no doubt about the fact that Gentiles have been blessed because of Israel and we have experienced a remarkable and long day of grace. During this period of God's dealing with mankind, Jews and Gentiles alike have the privilege of being called by the Gospel to be a part of the Church He is building. But lest Gentiles in conceit think God does no longer have an interest in Israel as His earthly people, He clearly states that in His plan, the nation will retain its identity through the coming Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. God chose Israel in the past and has not rejected it, although He has in a way, set aside His dealings with them during this time when He is calling a heavenly people.

The nations were to be blessed by a believing Israel, but that nation chose to be like the idolatrous nations around. God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, has blessed the Gentile nations anyway. He promised Abraham, the father of faith, and Isaac and Jacob that all the earth would be blessed because of their "seed." The Lord has done this by "being found in fashion as a man," and coming from the lineage of the patriarchs. Not all Israelis will be saved, nor will all church members be saved. Those who are in obedience to God and His Word will find the mercy they need. The privileges and invitation God makes in His divine plan, whether to Israel or to the nations of earth through the Gospel, are not to be withdrawn. What God does "is forever."

Both the Jews and Gentiles are benefited by each other. The Jews have brought blessing to Gentiles through the promises made to them. Gentiles have brought blessing to the Jews when through them the Gospel has reached to all parts of the world, and all (including those of the Diaspora) are able to "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Gentiles have obtained mercy by Israel's disobedience. "Disobedient and gainsaying" Gentiles have been blessed. Israel too will "obtain mercy" from the One they once rejected.

It is not strange when one stops to think that God has a special plan.
But the marvel of grace is what makes it amazing when He rescued fallen man.
Mankind started out in favor, but willfully mankind did choose
To go the way of his own will in spite of being told what he would loose.
Instead of abandoning man completely, God in His plan designed
A way for any who would seek Him, nearby he could find,
That Way is a Person who came to His own, but they His grace rejected.
So now from every part of humanity, he that believes is accepted.

In the plan Israel was the one to bring blessing to earth.
God's own Son was considered by Israel to be of little worth.
So instead of a nation, God called individuals to come to Him.

Those who responded in faith, He filled with the Spirit within.
Through them God is reaching out to others in this day of grace.
The efforts they put forth in the Gospel, has reached others in nearly every place.
There are not that many locations on earth where that message has not sounded.
Even where sin seems to be in control, God's grace has abundantly abounded.

It seems such a pitiful scene to watch Israel in unbelief today.
They have been miraculously helped, and yet choose to go their own way.
There are signs of new life coming, but most think they're doing it on their own.
If they are returning to the God of their fathers, it hasn't yet as a nation shown.
Still, far be it from we who have been blessed by "Jacob's greater Son,"
To think that we deserve, what God in His grace has done.
It is all of God that truth we heard, and in His plans have been saved.
In the plans of the Sovereign God, salvation through Israel's Messiah He gave.

"My Father in heaven, by Thy grace and imparted wisdom, please keep me from ever thinking I am superior in any way to any one, let alone the Jews who are Thy earthly people. I do pity them for "they know not what they do." But I also pray for them that they might find the peace of Christ as individuals. I await eagerly the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will sit on David's throne and they as a nation will recognize Him as their Lord and King. Amen."

ROMANS 11:33. *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out."*

UNSEARCHABLE.

Wisdom's depths from God's own claim are in a place so hard to find,
That from that hidden, wondrous mine of truth; come things mere man
Can never fully understand nor comprehend, without the Light divine.
And then so little.

And knowledge complete and limitless, that heavens made and worlds formed,
Are but a glimpse of a knowing so far removed from us, so infinite.
But this I know; He whose depths can never be traced and likeness claimed;
Has made me His.

So without knowing much of what I could, or using wisdom as I should;
I still am able to enjoy and then exclaim to Him who has all this -
Wisdom past finding out and knowledge who none can know, even if they would:
I am Thine.

"All glory to Thee, O Father of Eternity, who is so limitless in every way, we never can compare: Thanks for taking note of this small speck of human clay who am nothing in myself. But here I am Father, happy, content, at peace and full of gladness I don't deserve in the slightest. If from the depths of Thy wisdom and knowledge, there is some small crack I can fill, then I am ready for use. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 11:33-36

GIVING HONOR TO GOD

How wise and carefully designed are the plans of God and the carrying out of those amazing purposes for the blessing of all mankind! God made us for Himself; not as mindless senseless robots, but as part of His creation that could respond willingly to His love, acts of grace and mercy of our own volition. In His sovereign will He chose Israel and did not cast them off completely when they refused and ignored His will and His Son. He temporarily set them aside and at the same time, chose from them by His sovereign electing grace, a remnant who would be part of His heavenly people - the Church. Israelites were the foundation and as time passed, were formed as living stones in the building. Even though these are the "times of the Gentiles," God still has plans for the nation to be grafted again into the root of the faith of Abraham and flourish again.

No philosophy or design of intelligent men could ever have conceived such an all-encompassing plan as a way to bring people who can make choices, into fellowship and harmony with the Almighty Creator. He is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, He is the Righteous, Eternal God - and we can know Him! Right at the beginning of man's history there was fellowship followed by failure but a means of acceptance was made because of the substitution of an innocent victim. Then on the basis of Abraham's faith in God, blessing was provided for all the nations of the earth. The faith-principle was established and it pleased God. Years later the nation formed from Abraham's seed turned away from their privileged position to copy the Gentile

nations. They began to interpret the God law gave them in their own way to suit their own purposes. When their promised Messiah came to them, they rejected Him and remain cut off from national blessing until this day. But God will fulfill His promises to them as His earthly people through whom all Gentile nations will again be blessed.

No one can know the infinite mind of God. No one can ever give any advice to God about His ways, His works or the wonders of His wisdom. We might learn a few things about our Infinite God, but even that is only as He is willing to reveal them. Everything that exists is "of Him." He is the Cause and the Source of everything that is. "Through Him" everything works bringing the effect He desires. He is the Sustainer and Upholder of all things. Everything is for Him to fulfill His eternal purposes. How can we ever describe, or even attempt to describe, our God! This is impossible!

But as a Gentile who has been brought in and grafted into the root of the faith of Abraham, I have been brought into the place of blessing as a member of Christ's Body. I know Israel has been broken off while we who are strangers have been brought in. But now it seems our times of blessing are about passed. So-called Christians have set about to do the same as unbelieving Israel did. Forms, traditions, ego-building ideas have been substituted for repentance of sin, faith in Christ alone, and heart-felt gratitude for the grace of God that has been shown to us. We (the Church of God) have not taken the place of Israel, and never will. But Christendom has gone so far from God's plan that there is no way we Gentiles can escape the judgment of God!

I know I cannot describe God nor understand His infinite Person. But I have experienced His grace, His mercy and His love. I know He is perfect in wisdom and justice. I know He is the Source of all things physical, moral and eternal - and even of us as human beings. I know He has done all things well and through all that has been brought into being, displays the perfections of His glory. I know He enables me to glorify Him in my body and spirit which He has purchased with the blood of Christ. I know Him, speak to Him, enjoy Him and love Him. He is my God, my Father, my Savior, my Redeemer, my Lord and Master, my Priest, my King - all glory and praise, all honor and blessing be to my God forever and ever!

It is far beyond my ability to define Him or to bring,
The praises, honor and glory that are deserved for my Lord and King.
But I know He knows my thoughts - even the things I cannot say -
And I believe He understands that I to Him my homage pay.

All praise belongs to Him who chose to make me live.
He has preserved my life each day and to Him I give
My thanks and adoration for His faithfulness in the past -
And by His grace I hope to daily praise Him as long as my life shall last.

All honor belongs to Him who is the Highest of the high.
Earth is His footstool, the carpet of His floor, the sky.
There is none who can compare, He is the God of eternity.
All power in all the universe is His, for life and death He has the key.

All worship belongs to Him who is limitless in His being.
He is omnipotent and omniscient - is everywhere all things seeing.
He hears beyond the words I say, knows beyond my thoughts.
He is willing and glad to speak to me, and sees beyond my faults.

All authority belongs to Him, He made everything and maintains
The orbits of the stars and atoms, there is power in His name.
Kings and kingdoms, nations and people owe existence unto Him.
By virtue of His authority, He had power to forgive sins.

Life and breath and everything we need to stay alive -
Comes from the Source of life, He knows when I will die.
I rest in the "unknowable," I don't need to worry or understand
All about everything for I am kept by divine hands.

It rest in peace and confidence, the Eternal God is my Father.
Much about Him I'll never know, but from what I know, I gather
The information that assures me everything is under control.
To Him who holds everything in place, I give the keeping of my soul.

"Father in heaven, I am not being so presumptuous as to try to describe Thee. It is just that it seemed right this morning to dwell on the riches of Thy glory and Thy

Person. In reverence and respect, I bow my heart to honor Thee today and give Thee praise and glory in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 12:1

YOUR BODY

In my journey of examining the Gospel from God's own commentary, I came to the place where the theological unfolding of the Gospel message, now turns to the practical application of these holy truths - and God, through His chosen apostle, begins with me! I am one of those brethren Paul refers to. I cannot escape this fact. In no way can I excuse myself or say I am not included in this heart-felt appeal. This is not some weak-hearted suggestion. In my mind I see tear-filled eyes looking over the miles (and ages) at me. And this appeal is based on the highest possible motivation - the mercies of God! How could I ever ignore such beseeching! How could I ever relegate this to some "Bible Study" in the confines of a gathering of scholars or the privacy of one's own private chamber!

The "mercies of God" are obvious to me every day of my life! I have just been reminded in reading through Romans, that I have been "justified by grace" and made the "righteousness of God" in Christ. No longer some kind of free-lance person, but before God I am "in Christ," "accepted in the Beloved." I have been set apart by God's grace - not law, have been given the Holy Spirit who dwells within and adds to my feeble supplications His unlimited knowledge of every situation with the urgency of His loud voice and holy tears. Not only this but in God's eternal purpose, He has sovereignly elected this poor, weak person to share in His coming glory that is beyond description. Still further, there is nothing that will ever separate us from the love of God who is forever faithful to me. What motivation to respond to this heart-felt appeal.

To present one's body indicates that one yields all his capacities (which are God-given) freely to the use of another for purposes that up until now have not been used. The grace of God to me should not make this a comparison to anyone else's actions, but urges the consecration of my whole person to the Lord because of who He is. By voluntarily "signing up" for this privileged duty, I step into the freedom of service for God without the restraints of imposed slavery. A living sacrifice has yielded to the will of another voluntarily like Isaac yielded himself to Abraham when he was laid on the altar.

This changes an imposed service to an intelligent, spiritual, priestly service. This has nothing to do with forms or ceremonies. There are now in Christendom a lot of forms and formal services that are designed by men to make people feel religious. When an individual is motivated by the mercies of God to engage in spiritual service, this comes from an appreciative heart of one who loves the Lord and counts it a great blessing to be able in this way to serve God with the whole person - spirit, soul and body.

When giving a sacrifice one seeks to find the best he has to give.
Then in an act of grateful privilege, what he has no longer lives
To itself or any selfish pursuits, there is a much higher call.
The living sacrifice has nothing more to give, he has presented all.

Behind this sacrifice there lies a motivation that is next to none.
One considers all the mercies of God and what He in grace has done.
This stirs not only the emotions, but the intelligent thoughts of the mind -
And searches for all that he calls his own, presenting the best he can find.

Nothing that lies in his storehouse, or none of the investments made,
Can rise to express the value and appreciation for the price Christ paid -
That all of the mercies of God can be freely bestowed upon us.
So the best one can give is himself, placing himself wholly into God's trust.

A living sacrifice is a treasure for that is the very best we have.
Even at that it is small, compared to what the Father gave,
When He gave His unique Son, and the Son of God gave Himself for me.
How could I ever withhold what God asks, because of what He has made me to be.

"Father, I know I am no prize package. All I ever am and have and hope to be is because of Thy grace. So here I am again wanting to present myself, even though I did it once and for all time long ago. I am not just sure how this works, but I know within me is the desire to present myself again to Thee today for whatever is ahead. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 12:2

YOUR MIND

As I hear this urgent plaintive call for consecration in the lives of the saints of God, I am made conscious of that which hinders consecration - it is the world, literally, the age in which we live. The fashion of the age is arranged by the "god of this world," Satan, and he keeps changing the fashion of it to keep it appealing to the wandering minds of human beings. He has a pattern of life he wants everyone to conform to - to be molded into. There are areas of life in this age that are contrary to the intelligent, spiritual, priestly worship God desires from us.

The world's religion seeks to placate the disturbed consciences of those who are convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit. "The pleasures of sin for a season" are avidly followed by those who want to blot out the real issues of life that people need to face day after day. The education of the world seems to deliberately try to turn people away from the knowledge of God to the changing ideas and philosophies of those who do not want to think they are in any way accountable to God. The "brethren," Jews and Gentile believers need to heed this call to consecration because the world system will never cease trying to pressure us into what is acceptable to it.

The human mind when God created man, was able to enjoy what God enjoyed and would focus on that that which brought pleasure to God. When sin came in, the mind was "darkened." The mind was that which made man a "living soul" after the body was formed out of the dust of the ground. The life of the soul includes the senses, touch, taste, sight, hearing and smell, by which we respond to all we see all around us. The mind also is able to produce thoughts, imaginations, and intelligent reasoning. It can retain things by memory that we have experienced in the past.

The control of the mind is a calculated attempt by the world-system to control and conform a person to it, and the activities in which it wants one to engage in. The Holy Spirit doesn't just inform us but challenges us to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. The transformation (transfiguration) of the mind is not just an outward change. That is just being conformed. "Transfiguration" is an inward change that comes from the renewing of the mind.

The question that is often asked is, "How can the mind be renewed?" This begins in a believer when we are born again. The mind of the unbeliever is dead to God. We became alive to God in our spirit when we were "born of the Spirit." So, the renewing of the mind does not refer to spiritual life. Our bodies remain the same as they were before we were saved, and will remain this way until we are instantaneously changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems that the renewing of the mind means taking controlling power over the soul by capturing the imaginations that sometimes run wild, the attractions of pleasure that appeal to our base nature, the feelings that can be moved by music and entertainment. Even memory has a tendency to focus on the things that happened when Satan was in control. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God both have the power to aid us in bringing about this transfiguration within the soul.

The whole of conscious living has to be directed by faith in the One who made us a "new creation," and gave us a new direction for our intelligence to follow. Memory and feelings are able to be controlled by yielding to the Spirit, because "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Because we are "in Christ" and He in us, we can experience God's will in our lives. It is good for us and acceptable to Him. God's will when practiced, brings us into maturity.

Believers are in a state of spiritual growth when we present our bodies as our priestly worship, and when our minds are renewed. Our whole life-experience is transfigured from within. The good will of God will produce outwardly that which is good for us. In turn, that activity will be acceptable to God because it comes from His design and His plans to accomplish His purposes in and through us.

It is not an easy matter to go upstream against the tide.
This is only done when we as branches in the Vine abide.
The fashion of the world leads to death, not into life -
Discontent and disappointment are there along with strife.

We do not need to follow that world-pattern any more.
When our minds are moved, we know what we are here for.
All the faculties that make to become what we are -
Can be brought under control by the Holy Spirit's power.

To not be conformed to the world may seem easier said than done.
But we are not left without divine enablement from the Holy One.
We do have the responsibility over our wandering mind to take control.

This becomes a reality by the transfiguring of the soul.

There may be a little difference between the soul and the mind.
The mind is like a control-tower directing the soul to find
The path of obedience to God and His will, that we can approve
And experience in a practical way the outworking of His love.

God has given us the guidelines so that this body in which I dwell,
Will follow the direction it should go according as the mind can tell
The whole person that I am, made of body, and soul and spirit -
What the will of God is for me, and how I best can do it.

God's will, is good for me to follow and it is also good for Him;
Because I can accomplish what He wants, and His will keeps me from sin.
It is acceptable to Him; He has purposes and plans to maintain.
And when His perfect will works in me, the world around me is restrained.

“Heavenly Father, it is my prayer today that not only will I keep my mind stayed on Thee, but that as I seek guidance for the days ahead, my mind will be renewed afresh to know and carry out Thy will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 12:3

SELF-ESTIMATION

There is a problem in almost every human being that can hinder our spiritual worship. That is to have a wrong estimation of ourselves. An honest, accurate evaluation is based on knowing who we are in Christ if we are believers - not on comparing ourselves with other people. It is possible to claim we are so worthless that we aren't capable of worshipping or serving God. Usually that is a cop-out for not doing what we know we should. This is true though if it were not for the grace of God in saving us and placing us in Christ. Our self-worth as believers is based on our identity with Christ and being in Christ. By the holy standards of God, we are not capable of very much. In Christ we have been brought into the standards of perfect righteousness before God because we are seen in Him. We are able today and forever to worship and serve God according to His eternal standards through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Usually the problem we have is that we way over-estimate ourselves. Pride is a basic temptation of most people. Pride of nationality, religion, race, success - even pride of grace makes us think we are important, and can stop what God wants to do through us. Our view of our importance is really only our own view. Other people could tell us humbling things if they were willing to. This opinion of ourselves is mentioned four times in this verse indicating that this has a lot to do with the renewing of our minds. To evaluate one's self by the world's standard can either leave us with an exalted perception of our worth, or under-estimate what God says a person is worth. Much worldly value is placed on one because of that person's achievements, wealth, philanthropy or some other effect that person had on society.

God has allotted a measure of faith for each person so that that person can fulfill whatever the Holy Spirit leads to do. The measure does not work based on making comparisons with the efforts of other people, but on the ability that God gives the individual. Therefore, it is important that I have the discernment of the role that God has given me to fill and fill it to the best of my ability.

Being constrained by the mercies of God, I am to be consecrated to divine service when I use what God has given in the way that He intended. That intelligent service is an act of worship to the One who has saved and called me. This first of a series of exhortations is a result of the transfiguration that comes from the renewing of the mind. The Lord Jesus Himself is the Pattern of transfiguration [Mat.17:2]. The Principle of transfiguration is given here in Romans 12:2 where we are told to be renewed in our minds. The Power of transfiguration is the Holy Spirit according to 2nd Corinthians 3:13.

There may be times when we think we have little worth
So, seek some way to stay out of the light.
We think of ourselves in the eyes of people we know on earth
And for some reason keep ourselves hidden from sight.
Honest evaluation is not an act of our pride -
It is well that we stop to consider our call.
There is no reason for us to our faith in Christ hide -
Because one who God saved is His child after all.

A greater cause for self-examination is this -
We usually ourselves way too far over-estimate.

We value what we've achieved and the world calls success -
Credit for our self-worth we willingly take.
To value our life and our labor in order to reach a perceived goal -
Is not very wise to take in one's own hand to do.
A high estimation of self is damaging to my soul -
And is really only self-deceiving, when finally, we are through.

God has His measure and gives us the faith -
To accomplish all the plans that He made.
The work He assigns can only be done by His grace,
And has value only when on Christ our mind is stayed.
Common sense evaluation by the Spirit's instruction
Will give a good estimation of the things we have done.
In spiritual intelligent worship and sincere cooperation -
There can be honor that is brought to God's Son.

"Father, I know there is a tendency in me to over estimate the abilities I have and the work that I do. Please give to Thy servant a sensible evaluation of myself so that I don't sin against Thee by not doing what I should, or by going too far too fast and doing what I shouldn't. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 12:4-5

MANY, BUT ONE

I noticed in my journey through Romans, the believers in Rome would have been made conscious of something that had not been understood before - all believers in Christ no matter where they are or of what background or culture they may be - are members of the Body of Christ.

This great multitude of believers from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture of the Church, compose one corporate body. This is not *like* a body, but it *is* the Body of Christ in its character. Every saved person is part of this Body like the members of our physical bodies are part of a unity that makes our body. Body parts scattered around would not be a body. They have to be unified - joined together - and each part is guided and controlled by the head. Each one in the Body of Christ has a work to do and a role to fulfill under the direction of the Head, who is Christ.

In this plea for cooperation, the unity of the Body is in contrast with one who has estimated himself way above what he ought to. Each member has a different work, and yet each is a member of all other members. We are "members of one another." The Church which is the Body of Christ is illustrated by the marriage of a man and a woman. Christ and the Church form a unified entity, the same as a husband and wife form a marriage. Each believer is a member of Christ and of one another, so when as a unified group of individual parts, they make up the Body of Christ - the Church.

The local fellowship of believers is not called "the Body of Christ" but is composed of those who are in the Body. The local assembly is called "the house of God," so when we read those words as they relate to the people of God, it has the fellowship of the saints in a local area as the focus of the teaching. Each one in the "house of God" is already in the "Body of Christ" when they have been "baptized by one Spirit into one Body."

The members in the Body have been placed there by the Holy Spirit. When one comes into the fellowship of an assembly, it is supposed that person is a believer. In the "house of God" there is failure and departure. In the "Body of Christ" there is genuine life and each member of that Body is there permanently. The fellowship of believers may be broken; therefore, we are not called "members" in the house of God. Some are vessels of honor and others of dishonor in the "house of God," the assembly of believers.

Perhaps the saints in the assembly at Rome were able to see their link with both Jews and Gentiles all over the world and would be able to understand what their own gathered company was a part of. A small assembly may feel themselves of little value until they can understand that each one is part of a great corporate body. The local gatherings are to strengthen and nurture those faithful believers.

It is hard to imagine in these days marked by schism -
That there is a great corporate unity of saints because Christ who is risen
Has made each member to be part of the Body of which He is the Head -
And each one is indwelt by the Spirit, and by the Spirit is led.

This Body was small when it was formed nearly 2000 years ago.

But since that time, this Body has continued daily to grow.
As the Gospel of truth was preached and by the hearers believed -
Into that Body was placed each new member who has Christ received.

Instead of thousands that composed the Body at the beginning -
There are now billions in the Body, most of whom are already in heaven.
We who live now are members of each other - and of them -
All of us together in the Body are members of Him.

This is not some secret society that is designed by the will of man -
This is a work of God's doing, a miracle done as only He can.
He alone knows who are His and who has believed on the Son.
He alone gives life to each member and maintains them as one.

Occasionally I have been able to catch a glimpse of what it means.
I have met Body members in distant places I had never before seen.
There is a linkage there, a bond, which to unbelievers is hard to describe.
It is a closer unity than those have who are part of a cultural tribe.

It is the unity of the Spirit that helps members recognize one another.
Before many words are spoken, I sense this person is a sister or brother.
Each one has the same kind of love for the One who is the Head of the Church -
And we can discern love for each other without making a great search.

"Father of every one who knows Thee, I thank Thee for making me to hear Thy Word, then to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and for placing me by the baptism of the Spirit into the One Body. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 12:5 *"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."*

MEMBERS – YET ONE.

I am not a free lance. That is not what God intended when he made the body. In its infancy there wasn't a lot to see. A group of people waiting, praying and wondering what would happen next. But they were there with brothers and sisters who had heard the same word, "Tarry...until ye be endued with power from on high." They did what their Lord had said. They weren't leaving. They didn't try to sneak away without others seeing; they were waiting just like a child waiting to be born. The parts were there ready to function openly, but until the Holy Spirit came who would make the body function right, they waited and prayed. 120 is not a small number to settle into the quietness of waiting. Did they get on each other's nerves during those ten days or did they even then, begin to work in harmony and unison like a body? However, the days passed, they were all there with one accord when the Holy Spirit came and manifested Himself. The suddenness of it must've startled them but they were ready, the body though small, was together. Each one of them saw the fire, each one experienced the fire, each one of them was filled with the Holy Spirit, each one of them began to speak appropriately as the Spirit gave them utterance. The many were one – one body. And that body worked harmoniously and in power.

We are not able to function as a body alone. The body is much larger now but it is still one body. The number of members in the body has expanded, multiplied thousands of times, but we are still members one of another. I cannot be nor do what God intends unless I am where He has placed me, doing what He has gifted me, linked closely with the other members so that the body works right. The minister waits on his ministry; the teacher on his teaching; the exhorter on his exhortation; the giver keeping it simple; the ruler watching carefully; the caregiver with a happy face. When all work together in the body, it works right because that is the way it is when we are "in Christ."

Then among us and all around us the word is out, "God showed up in fire." And when He lit the fire in the body it came alive and still is alive and well: not perfect but well.

"O Father in heaven who sent the Son to be the Savior of the world: I thank You that the plans You laid before the foundation of the world, work, even though we hardly know what's going on. When the Lord Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and empower us, it really made things happen. Sometimes it seems like we are not doing a very effective job on our watch, but I take heart when I realize we are all one body in Christ. He is what makes this body live and work. It is His power alone without human expertise, but in human persons who are members one of another that makes this group of many be one. Thanks for allowing me to be a part of such a body. Amen."

ROMANS 12:6-8

YOUR PART

Gifts have been given by God for the benefit of those in the Body of Christ and to be used for the glory of God. Grace to use those gifts is given to us by the Holy Spirit. Faith is the element needed to use the gifts in the way God intends. The Holy Spirit is the One who makes appropriate use of those gifts in the house of God. He is able to work in power to fulfill the plans God has for His people. God is the same. The gifts He has given are the same today as they were in the beginning of the Church. The needs are the same in this day and age as they always were and God is still working in the world today in spite of the failures of men.

Prophets and apostles were in the foundation of the Church because they revealed the mind of God. Truths that were previously hidden about the Church have become a direct blessing and a gift to the people of God through those who have the gift of prophesy. The ministry of edification, exhortation and comfort begins with the Holy Spirit inspiring the prophet to speak profitably in proportion to his faith. This will be a constant need for the welfare of the Lord's people.

To minister to the material needs of the Lord's people can be a thankless service that can be overlooked or ignored. This gift was exemplified by the Lord Jesus when He came to serve rather than being served. Faithfulness to one's ministry and loyalty towards those who are being served will occupy all of one's times and effort.

Teachers are clear thinkers who have taken the time to prepare to expound the truth of God's Word more perfectly. The Spirit of God enables that person to know how to best present the truth in a way that is understandable to those who are seeking to learn from him. Through his earnest efforts, the Lord Jesus Christ is more clearly known. There is a passion in the teacher to make other believers see the greatness and blessings we have in Christ.

There is a difference in exhortation in that the one who has been gifted in this way appeals to those being exhorted to act on what has been taught by the teacher and understood with the mind. Without reservation but with focused concern, the exhorter motivates those by using the gift he has been given so that obedience follows understanding.

It is not an easy work to rule and lead the saints of God. Words are not enough to use in carrying out the expectations and needs of the office of the bishop. They are to watch over the people in their care with diligence. Sacrifices are necessary to organize and manage the work of the assembly. A certain vision of the needs of the flock in the future is needed as well as dealing with issues and problems that are presently affecting the work of the assembly. The Spirit of God does raise those up and gives them care and concern for the people of God.

To actually take the time to gladly care for the needs of others is not a common response of most people. We would rather have our needs met by others and be served by others, than be willing to serve others. To cheerfully show mercy with a joyful spirit is truly a gift from God. A sad countenance does not make an act of mercy less valuable, but it does not raise the spirit of one who needs to be comforted. There is great value in being able to empathize with genuine sympathy when visiting those who are sick and afflicted. Cheerfulness ("hilarious") merciful giving opens up the heart of one who is going through a difficult time. The Holy Spirit of God gives great value to the attitude of one believer towards another as well as the acts of mercy he does.

God Himself supplies this variety of gifts so the needs of all the people in the house of God are met. We need to know what God has enabled us to do best, and do it with our heart as to the Lord and not unto men.

In God's eternal purposes He chose to give gifts to men.
He knew our weakness and helplessness apart from Him.
With divine wisdom and understanding of each one -
He gave gifts to us so His work among us can be done.

Some are able to put into understandable words
The fundamentals of our faith so that as each truth is heard -
All of us may realize our foundation is solid and secure -
And the faith we are built on will last and endure.

To be a servant is not always to be appreciated by others;
Especially when your ministry is not acknowledged by your brothers
Who take all your efforts to be loyal and faithful;
For granted and don't seem to be in the slightest way grateful.

Not everything in the scriptures are easy to understand.

So, teachers with divine help clarify things to the common man.
They seem to see all things clearly that most of us miss -
And as a result, about God's truth there is no need to guess.

There are those who know what God from us expects.
The exhorter can lead and show people what is next.
To motivate others into action is not an easy task.
But the one who exhorts does so without being asked.

Generous giving is not a complicated action.
To some people it is considered a means of satisfaction.
Those who rule with diligence are usually good in leadership.
And those who show mercy do so with care and fellowship.

All of these gifted people when they are found in one place -
Are the evidence that through them God reveals His grace.
Wholehearted use of the gifts that God has given -
Is one way we can identify those who are going to heaven.

“Father of all who know Thee by faith: may all the saints here in this place be able to effectively use what they have been given as gifts from Thee to bring glory to Thee and blessing to Thy people. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 12:9-16

PRACTICE LOVE

Listening through the word of God to the specific practices of the use of God-given gifts, made me seriously reflect on what I do in the house of God, for the people of God. Am I really using what God has given me by His grace? Do I carry out the reason for these gifts by faith - true active faith? Is the Spirit of God free to use these gifts through me, or do I resist His leading? After thoughtful consideration of the ministry of the gifts that are used in specific ways, the challenge is presented as to the motivation to practice these in general terms.

It is possible to pretend to love and practice all the actions of living as a Christian, without being genuine and sincere. Sincere good will goes way beyond being polite. It involves wanting the best for others in spite of the cost I might have to pay to honor them. Abhorring evil and malice is really one of the most visible ways my true Christianity is seen. Being glued to what is good contrasts malice with benevolence which is the practice of love.

Love reveals itself when there is true affection such as is seen in the relationship between parents and children in a family. Expressions and acts of unsolicited kindness that bring honor to brothers and sisters in Christ and benefit to all, is evidence that the genuine love of God is in us. To prefer them or see them going forward, even ahead of us, is true Christian love.

Zeal in spiritual matters will involve the use of my time and energy in seeking to serve the Lord. There will be a burning desire to fulfill my responsibilities and accomplish something that is lasting for the glory of God. This is a cause for joy as we, in sure hope, look for the Lord to come. We will be able to go through the pressures and problems that come in our service for the Lord, with an on-going urgency in our prayers to God that keeps us in a fellowship with Him.

The needs of others may escape our attention if we do not make a point of asking about the well-being of our brothers and sisters with a genuine sense of love for them. It is not hard to discern insincere questions that have only the sense of politeness about them. The practice of love is a general principle when it relates to meeting the needs of others. People deserve their privacy and we should not advertise our giving nor our pursuit of showing hospitality. This is not just a casual occasional act of showing hospitality, but is something that we actually go after - even to strangers who may be angels.

It is hard to bless those who oppose you and what you seek to do. They may even go out of their way to speak against you or promote some malicious evil. It appears the best thing we can bless them with is the Gospel with our words and actions. We may be privileged in a small way to experience what our Lord did who "when He was reviled, reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not." Even though there may be a reason for retaliation, do not do it.

Sometimes it may be harder to rejoice with another person than to weep with them. When I hear of God's blessing on another person's labor and mine seems fruitless, it may be hard to truly rejoice with them. When another has recovered from a sickness and I have to live with mine daily, it may be hard to rejoice with them. If another is honored in a work that I might have done or shared in, and I am overlooked, I need to

deliberately make a choice to rejoice with that person. Some trials and afflictions others go through, need me to stay connected with them because perhaps I can help them get through the testing time. Silent companionship may be the best comfort I can give to a weeping saint who has suffered a great loss.

Cultivating harmony takes time and effort. To be united in mind is a purposeful act as we practice love to people in need or who are of different station in life. To be patronizing is offensive to others. I need to deliberately avoid the temptation of comparing myself to others or being carried away by those who think they are of a higher class. Self-conceited people are strangers to the practice of love.

To some people, love means they have a kind of fuzzy feeling
Towards other people or things, that to their flesh is appealing.
But to really practice love in the routine of daily living;
Is the life of a Christian, as God intends.

Pretense and hypocrisy are two things that go hand in hand.
The first is outward appearance, the second is in the inward man.
The practice of love is my commitment to do what I can
To bring others what God wants to send.

The service of the Lord God will challenge me to share
What He has given me with others so they will know He cares,
And through the practice of love we are able to bear
Burdens so that others under them don't bend.

Sometimes enthusiasm and joy are what is needed.
Other times people need to know that their problems are heeded,
And by the practice of love into their hearts are seeded -
Thoughts of the blessings God gives to men.

There will be times in this practice when I will be caused to weep.
Other times there will be conflict when for some peace I seek.
By the practice of love my thoughts on what pleases Christ I keep -
As I remember how God looks upon them.

As I serve God's dear saints as I know I ought,
I will remember that I daily need to be taught
The practice of love so that it will be caught
By those God is bringing to Him.

"Gracious Father, in my life there have been those who have practiced holy Christian love towards me that has brought me great blessing. By Thy grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in me, may I wisely show this practice of love towards others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 12:18. *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."*

PEACEABLE.

How does Christ show that He loves me?
Is it because I deserve it or what He sees?
No; really He loves me as a result of His grace
And I am to respond to others as one in His place.

It would not be right for me to pick and choose
It is not my right to decide who will win or lose.
God expects me to pass on what I have to others,
Whether they are strangers or enemies; sisters or brothers.

If something has hurt me and made me mad,
Rather than going around with a face that is sad -
Forgive any hurt; leave that person to the Lord -
Go on with my life and just live as I should.

Reconciliation follows forgiveness; and that an act of choice
Retaliation will hurt me as much as my enemy's voice,
So, I must deal with my feelings before dealing with issues -
And leave a good "Gospel taste" rather than lose the mission.

“O God, I am thankful that Thou hast preserved me from making a lot of enemies. It must be that Thou art watching over me some way to keep this from happening. I know there are those who speak against me and the work I do, but in Thine own way; Thou hast kept them from ever confronting me personally. If the time ever comes when I have to be confronted, please prepare me ahead of time so that I can respond genuinely as this chapter tells me to. Thou art my God and I trust Thee unreservedly, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 12:17-21

REAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

I stopped today to ask myself, "Am I willing to live like Christ lived? Am I willing to love like Christ loved? Am I willing to forgive like Christ forgave?" - and I realized I needed to take another clear look at the grace of God I have received. God is expecting me to pass on His grace that He showed to me, to others through me. All thoughts and plans of "getting even" with those who have done evil to me must be put aside forever. Doing what is right by carefully thinking whether it looks, and actually is, right before the eyes of everyone, is a charge of holy behavior put on me. Honorable Christian living is expected of me no matter what others may do to me.

People may never like me and what I do in my life for God. They may think I am interfering in the lives of others as I seek to present the truth of God to them. But I am called upon to not be unnecessarily offensive or antagonistic to those around me in spite of what they might do. I am to be known as a peace-lover to everyone. It may be as a peace-lover I will be called upon to be a peace-maker by those who do not live in peace with those around them. My reputation as a Christian will not be tarnished if I don't insist on "standing up for my rights." I can not excuse the wrong another person does, but I can recognize and forgive him, and in Christ's name, love and show him grace like the Lord Jesus Christ did.

I may not feel like forgiving a person for wrongs done, but my attitude and actions are to be such that a healing of the relationship can take place. Bitterness on my part really only affects me at first but afterward can defile many. I cannot change the other person - only myself. It would be very wrong for me to set about making plans to deal with that other person in a negative way. God is the only One who can rectify a situation because He is the only One who "looks upon the heart." If righteous wrath is needed, it has to come from God. He can deal in a just and righteous way with any evil or wrong-doing. It may not come out now, but in the future. Vengeance is on the basis of perfect holiness - and that is only in God. We can intercede for enemies and even love them, but only God can take holy vengeance on them.

"Random acts of kindness" are important for us to consider as a way of bringing justice and/or change upon one who does not like me, what I do and what I stand for. The "coals of fire" may come, but they must come by means of the hand of God. There may be genuine repentance on the part of one who opposes the righteousness of God, when he has been given something, he really needs with no strings attached. When we bless those who persecute, and pray for those who are spiteful, it takes the sting out of what has happened to us. At the same time, it may produce a sense of guilt and remorse in one who has acted against you for no reason. "Coals of fire" will come from God on those who refuse His grace that has been extended through one who lives as a Christian should live.

The hate of those who oppose God's grace may overwhelm the Christian who is living in a sinful world. We are challenged and charged to not allow this to happen. We are to promote what is good, say what is good and do what is good. We are to be "a people zealous of good works." In that way we have something positive to show the love of God to others through our real Christian living. Maintaining a kind disposition is what the principle of overcoming entails.

There is no doubt if I live for God,
That some people will not like me.
To live according to the principles of God's Word,
Will make wrong living easy to see.
By carefully avoiding what I know is wrong,
And committing to what is right -
I will be known as one who in God is strong,
And my Christian living will show some light.

It is not always easy to live in peace,
When others seek to provoke some strife.
My responsibility is to show real grace,
And the value of a Christian life.

It is wrong for me to seek revenge
For wrongs that to me were done.
God alone knows how to make amends,
In a way that pleases Him alone.

He may need to act in righteous wrath,
Or He may choose to act with grace.
He knows what led one down that path,
And what is behind that hardened face.
I can only see the outward appearance,
God alone can look on the heart.
I might act in inappropriate vengeance,
God knows just where to start.

It is up to me to do good for evil,
Even if I really don't want to.
My vengeance really would not be equal,
Unless I know all the other person has gone through.
Mine is to give him something to eat,
And if he is thirsty, give him a drink.
That way when by God's direction we meet,
He will be caused to stop and think.

If righteous wrath is to fall upon him,
It will need to come from the hand of the Lord.
Coals of fire have a special power in them,
To make him stop and consider his words.
It is possible that by my choosing to love
The sinner but not his sin -
He will seek out to get what he knows I have,
And God, will in divine grace, save him.

“Father of all grace, this morning I am challenged again to be Christ-like in all I will be involved in today. May the truths that I teach, and the way I speak, be words of grace, seasoned with salt, and spoken in love like the Lord Jesus spoke when He was here. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 13:1-7

SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY

To be a loyal follower of Christ does not mean I have no responsibility to those in authority in the town, state and country where I live. I am called upon as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to submit to the laws of society where I live or in the places I may visit. Sin is lawlessness. Lawlessness is an attitude of spirit that rejects and refuses control apart from one's own self-interest. God Himself has appointed and put in place those who are in authority to stop lawlessness. I may not be pleased with the persons who are in the place of leadership, but I am obligated to pray for them and submit to them. As a result of prayer on their behalf, my loyalty and responsibility to God may not be compromised. Any disobedience to those in authority is only allowable in order to follow my higher loyalty to God and His will - not for my own personal reasons.

The teaching of headship begins here in the public practice of believers. Government authority is ordained by God. Leadership in the assemblies of God's people is raised up by the Holy Spirit of God to rule the people of God in an orderly way. This God-ordained authority is appointed in homes where responsible authority is given to the husband.

If I regard myself above legal authorities in earthly matters, not only will I be guilty of lawlessness as regards to the government, but I will bring judgment from God because I am rejecting what He established. The things that my conscience may dictate are those things that are spiritual. The law cannot control my conscience. Quiet subjection to legal authority is a Christian virtue that should be exemplified by my life and attitude toward governments. Satan will stir up opposition to unjustly oppose the Gospel and those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But the general practice of the law of the land is to maintain order among the citizens who live in that place. If, and when, the laws of the land make it impossible to follow the ways and will of the Lord, then it is appropriate for me to leave and seek a place to yield to the Supreme Authority.

It is part of my Christian testimony to follow the laws of the land so I will not misrepresent the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not have to fear those who enforce laws if I obey those laws. My submission to the laws and law-

enforcement officers will be for my own conscience's sake as well as for commonsense fear of those in authority.

In a similar way I am to submit to paying taxes to those who levy them. It is my hope that those funds will be used for the right reasons, but there are those who have been designated to make those decisions. My responsibility is to pay what I owe the country on whose roads I drive, on whose law enforcement officers I depend, on whose armies defend my rights and the place I live, and the servants who work for the well-being of the citizens. Those who levy the dues at the custom office have a God-given right to do that. I must conscientiously show the appropriate regard or those who hold those offices and those who wear the uniform of designated authority. The "sword" of their authority is evidence of the right they have to enforce the laws they represent. So, I am to regard them with respect. Not only those are representatives of the government am I to submit to with genuine respect, but also to those who are holding a place of honor because of their work, their position and/or their ability. Certain callings in society do deserve a higher honor than others, and as a Christian I am not to despise them, but honor them.

Often there are around me, things with which I don't agree.
I am not always happy with laws, and even "the powers that be."
But as a citizen I have a position, and One I represent too.
I know there are those who only hear, "The Gospel according to you."

I must take care to not break the laws or often be heard to complain.
Because in my role as a Christian citizen I represent Jesus' name.
People watch what I do, hear what I say, and form an opinion of me -
And by that opinion they may make a decision about Christ by what in me they see.

The way I drive, the things I prize, even the way I obey the laws -
Have a direct reflection on my unseen Lord and my commitment to His cause.
His desire is to universally bless mankind with His offer of His great salvation.
The laws we live by in daily life are lessons to keep us from condemnation.

It may seem to some we don't need the authority God has ordained in the nation -
Or we don't have to fear those who lead, or those of a higher station.
But the facts are these, God has established this order that people may come to Him.
And for me to ignore laws, taxes and custom, is to stumble others by my willful sin.

"O Holy God, my Father: I do recognize before Thee today that I have at times been wrong in criticizing those in authority. I confess to Thee this morning my sin, and ask for Thy help and grace to look positively upon where I am and what is going on around me. My prayer is that these who lead may learn to fear Thee and not allow things to happen here to hinder Thy Gospel preached. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 13:8-10

THE DEBT OF LOVE

I know there is one debt I will never be able to pay off. That is the debt of love I owe to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am forever indebted to Him who is "the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." By choosing to love others and honestly doing so, I am fulfilling what the law says. It is only right that I do not live beyond my means and that I do not owe personal debts. These I must pay whether they are known by others or are private matters. That is commonsense, responsible practical Christian living. Law-keeping is not the fullness of the law but loving others is.

To "love my neighbor as myself" brings me to ask, "Self, how do you love yourself?" I concluded that self-love includes seeking food to eat, clothing to wear, shelter from the elements and a desire to avoid being hurt in any way. It also includes a stable, enjoyable, blessed marriage that I can share continuously with my wife. Self-love really wants the love of my children and grandchildren who give evidence of their love for me and whom I love dearly. I also love the work I am called to do, the country where I live and the peace I enjoy. So, I am caused to stop and think if these are what I truly desire for my neighbors? Do I take steps to bring the evidence of this love to others around me? Do they know that I love the Lord and do love them too?

The laws of the land have their demands and they seek to bring about and maintain order to people and society as a whole. To do things right and to conduct life in an orderly, self-centered, righteous way does not fulfill the purpose of the law. That is only law-keeping. The principle of loving God and loving my neighbor is the basic principle of a living, vital Christian faith. This is done apart from merely keeping the laws under which society is conducted. Love, and grace that reveals love, fulfills any law that demands my obedience.

But far more important is that love for God and others, is the rule of life that believers in Christ live by. When that is done, all other obligations in life will be fully met.

To have love for other people is one of the proofs of life -
Especially when it is evident that they appreciate what I like.
By life, I mean eternal life that only God gives,
And is experienced when we conduct life as the Lord lived His.
He fed the hungry, healed the sick and gave sight to the blind.
He searched out and befriended those who society left behind.
Those who were outcast and were morally weak -
He made a point of letting them know for them He did seek.

The on-going conduct and principle of Christian love,
Is to show, and really from my heart pass on what I have.
I owe a debt of love to the Lord who loved me -
And in Christ's name I am to love others that they may see
The reality of God in the life of God's children who live near them;
And the love they demonstrate is like the love of Him
Who for their sake on the cross, His life for them gave,
That through His love and grace, their souls too might be saved.
It is a practical thing to make visible my love for the Lord.
It goes beyond my own personal study to applying the Word
Of God to myself that through me other people might know
The reality of faith by the evidence of love that shows.

Is he hungry? Then I must feed him. Does he need comfort? Then I must share
Some of what I have learned from my Lord who in love does care
For the outcasts and sinners as well as those who do fine -
I can show what He is like when from my heart, love they find.

I owe it to the Lord to reach out in love to others.
Not all respond if they are not spiritual brothers.
But how they react to love is not up to me.
My responsibility is that evidence of love they see.
I know God's grace is sufficient to meet every need.
I also know that when my love is evident, people are inclined to heed
The words that I say because they reinforced by what I do;
And by paying my debt of love, they will trust my Savior too.

“O God of love, my Father: what joy it gives to me to see a broken-hearted person responding to acts of Christian love. Remember in a special way today, that older woman who lost her husband a year ago today in a car accident. She probably is hurting a lot just now. Thanks for those who show her Christian love. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 13:10. *“Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”*

NO ILL.

Neighbors are not going away
They know what I do and a lot of what I say
If I am going to win him in the time of “Gospel day”
I must be living proof of one who has found The Way.

An armor of light is available to defend against the world
It is mine to put on if I choose, and of course, I really should
Because darkness around tries to turn me and take me where it would
But the armor of light keeps me following in the steps of my Savior and Lord.

It is not right for me to be careless, thinking what I do doesn't matter
For a believer gives light to the world, showing a life that is better
Not only that, but my life reflects what I think of my heavenly Father
So by grace and help I commit, to going with Him a little further.

I can also put on my Lord Jesus; just how, is hard to explain
But it seems to me that it is right, to follow His Word that is plain
It will not always be easy; there may be some suffering and pain
But by faith in Him alone, I won't follow the flesh again.

“Help me, O Lord, to be a real neighbor to my neighbors. May my life have a practical bent that indicates to them my interest and care for their well-being. Then maybe I can connect with them some way in spiritual things. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 13:11-14

THE DAY IS AT HAND

There is a tendency to spiritual lethargy and sleep when we live in a society that is fundamentally dark and ungodly. It is possible for those of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to look at events and the age we live in, through the eyes of the world system. The sense of urgency associated with the spread of the Gospel in the early Church is lost today. There is a spiritual sleep that settles upon us that we can become used to. The urgency that comes when we think that today may be the day the Lord returns for His own, should never leave us. We should be watchfully awake, ever vigilant to the opportunities around us to reach others with the Gospel of Christ. All we really have to do to be stirred in our souls to awake, is to look at the scenes in the world around us and we know the Coming of the Lord is near.

I know people have been scoffing at the waiting saints since the Lord left, promising to return. The "day of visitation" when He was here seemed short and long ago to many people. But there have been similar "days of visitation" through the passing generations that have brought many souls into the kingdom of God. Those brief times of light, have been flashing in the in the darkness all over the world. However, "the day is at hand" when the light of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will shine all over the world. We who know the Lord cannot be participants in the "works of darkness" but we must throw them off from us and away from us.

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can overcome the enemy, the flesh, with "the armor of light." When girded with the light of truth and righteousness, one is easily seen by those who love darkness. When they learn they cannot defeat the light, they will retreat to where they think their sin will not be exposed - hiding in darkness to continue to carry out their evil deeds. "The armor of righteousness" [2Cor.6:7] is available to us to overcome the world, and "the whole armor of God" [Eph.6:11] is available to protect us from the devil.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will find when "we walk in the light as He is in the light," we have fellowship with the Father, with the Son, with the Holy Spirit and with the saints of God. What holy company! What a safeguard! What strength is imparted! The evils of the hidden works of darkness, the results of wicked living, the after effects of allowing the works of darkness, never should be practiced by those who await the rapidly approaching day of the Lord's return.

The "armor of light" protects us from the enemy of the flesh even as Joseph was protected by the light of God upon him when he was sold into Egypt as a slave. Even more than that holy armor, is the Light of power and authority of the whole universe who is available to us when we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Every aspect of His Person: Savior, Anointed One, Master - is available to us to claim. We must put on for ourselves, the Lord Jesus Christ, lest the "spirit of the age" and the pressures of living in a dark day appeal to our lusts. We are "in Christ". We must not give any thought or even forethought to indulge our fleshly desires. When we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," we are putting on Christ-like characteristics of "meekness and lowliness of heart," of "grace and truth," and of love and light.

There are a lot of things around me, Father,
That draw my attention away
From the light of holy and righteous living, Father
Seeking to cause my feet to stray.
But I know that walking in the light, Father,
Is the safeguard of my soul.
The sounds that come from the darkness around, Father
Have lost their appeal and pull.

I am looking for that day to come, Father,
When Thou dost send Thy Son again for me.
And along with all the blood-bought Church, Father
We will be with Him eternally.
But I am still here in a dark world, Father,
And the pressure to conform is on -
Please give to Thy servant the necessary strength, Father,
To maintain a testimony that is strong.

I know when the armor of light is on, Father,
That the powers of darkness are made to flee.

And I have experienced the joy and blessing, Father,
Of walking in the light with Thee.
With this armor and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, Father,
Give Thy servant power to overcome.
I will be so greatly relieved, Father,
When I am finally safe at home.

"Amen."

ROMANS 13:14 *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."*

ARMOR.

There's no doubt about it; the enemy is near -so close to me I have no place to go
To find relief from onslaughts, O so great, so terribly deceiving.
That to face this terrible, implacable power so close, I know
Its help I need. Not from another, but from so deep within my breathing,
That I myself, will never hesitate the armor to take on.
Mine's the choice the armor of light to don, and no provision making
For this flesh of mine, to thus excuse itself.

That my eye seems the need to squint, is so intense, here I narrow
Eyelids so full of tears which once the water washes clean, the sight
That fills my view is so amazing, so beyond my thought.
The armor for my use, my safety, is no other than Lord Jesus Christ, the Light.
Armor true, that Joseph tried and won the battle of the flesh so valiantly;
Is still as sure to win my battles so intense, that He alone when placed upon this
soul of mine;
Brings victory over the flesh and wins the fight.

And then I turn to look beyond, and graced with colors brilliant and so bright,
And sounds so intense as to my whole attention claim. Its force appealing,
Its attraction everywhere I look, its seeming warmth and fellowship so right.
But closer still I move and reach out hands to warm at the fire glowing there,
And find its burning there outside, but inward cold, and hard and dark as night.
Is this too an enemy clothed so fine I cannot tell its truth for this one life of mine?
Ah yes, an enemy in disguise is there to claim, my time, my interest, and my sight.

Who is this one with challenge so attractive that to resist I scarce can find the strength;
To reach again, another armor to put on? The world has hold so bold and fine

That righteousness, the only armor I can find to stop it here, right now, before at length
Its velvet chains surround my neck and lead me like a fool to wayward paths, that twine
Insidious cloth so tight, I cannot break away from subtle light and sounds and
voices bright
Trying hard my soul to take its joy in pleasures wrong. But thanks to God the armor
that is mine
Is waiting to be put on, the One who in righteousness, holds the key to win the fight.

And look! Just there! Just beyond the ring of God's encircling grace, is enemy
number three;
Holding himself there just past my power to resist, his thrust, his darts all ready.
He's waiting till I'm sidetracked with some trivial pursuit; something that I think
holds there for me,
Some satisfaction that I cannot find within that circle of God's favor. Something petty,
But attracts the soul that has not fed its need, where nourishment true is found, in Thee.
And so, he waits, the devil, implacable, evil, undeterred; his time he bides to try to
take me.

But thanks to God, the Greater One has in wholesome grace, and tender mercy, provided:
Armor full, from feet to face; which God alone provides from His heavenly arsenal.
An armor there for me to take, and put upon me piece by piece; so that when I'm
fully arm`ed;
Resistance strong; empowered by the Holy Spirit; he flees, the enemy so diabolical.
Then on this journey long or short; with armor all completely tried and fully tested;
With holy power, given by Him who hears my prayer for strength and perseverance;
The enemy flees for now. I will remain armed. I know he'll come again when least
expected.

"O God and Father, who in tender grace and full supply, has provided all we need. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I come to pray for insight, understanding and wisdom in this fight with these enemies so strong. I know I am not able in myself to deal effectively and once for all with these foes. But I also appreciate more than I can express, the fact that in Your wise foresight, knowing my inherent weakness, an armor is there for my taking in every warlike situation. Amen."

ROMANS 14:1-6

OPINIONS

In observing believers for over sixty years as one of them myself, I am made aware of the fact that we are all "weak" in some areas of our lives. There were those who came from idolatry and in spite of the deliverance from that bondage, had opinions based on that background. They believe that anything associated with idolatry in any way was not to be touched. The same was true of those who came from Judaism. One would avoid certain foods because it was used in idol worship. Another may not wear clothes of differing fabrics. Another may have days they will not do certain things, and still another has certain hours of the day they will not work. So how do these divergent opinions affect the saints who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? We are to "receive" the person but not make the decision for him as to what he can or cannot do. By the teaching of the Word of God, he will be brought into the freedom of light and faith by experiencing not only the grace of God in salvation, but in the saints, who gladly receive him.

One of the basic principles of conduct in the Christian life, is to not have a condemning attitude towards others. When we are "transformed by the renewing of our mind," there will not be conformity to the world. Every believer does not have the same knowledge or strength. There is a willingness on the part of new believers to follow the teaching of the Word of God because of their appreciation of the Lord. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." When one is taught the truth of God, the Holy Spirit will reveal to one's own mind what the scriptures mean. One may come to understand all food can be eaten "if it be received with thanksgiving." Another may or may not think he should mix the fabrics of the clothes he wears.

Some, even today think the Sabbath is now Sunday even though Sabbath was and always is Saturday. No day is more holy in itself than any other day. There are certain things we do on the first day of the week that have been designated as opposed to other days. On that day we keep the Lord's Supper and also give a proportion of our weekly labor for the needs of others and the furtherance of the things of God. The law kept people in bondage to days, foods, forms and traditions. The freedom we have in Christ allows us to walk as free people but not to pass our own judgment on others. That would put them into the bondage of my personal opinions. I should remember the Lord is the only One who has full access to the inner reaches of one's mind. He alone can pass judgment on what comes from the "renewing of my mind."

The mind of a person is a powerful thing.
It can condemn us or give us a song to sing.
The power of the mind controls the body's action.
It can create turmoil, or bring satisfaction.

The habits of living can affect my mind.
They can open me to freedom, or make me spiritually blind.
The thoughts I allow to enter my mind through my senses
Can give me freedom, or pass on me a sentence.

When my mind is uncontrolled, I am in danger
Of offending my brother or turning away a stranger.
The mind uses words after thoughts to take a form.
The words in turn can bless, or toot my own horn.

Opinions that have been formed in my life in the past,
Have a tendency to want to control when on others they are cast.
I do have the power to bring my mind into control,
So that I don't let my opinions offend another man's soul.

The choices I make when I set my mind to it -
Are useful to me when my life to them fits.
For me to insist that others think like me,
Is not to be expected if I think realistically.

A mind at peace is attractive to others.
My opinions may differ from some other brother's,
But if he can see the reason for the peaceful mind I have

He may come to the freedom of light God to him gave.

The freedom from sin through the Gospel he will see.
He will learn how to be the Christian God wants him to be.
The quiet of forgiveness and acceptance brings him peace.
He will be able to show to others the blessings of grace.

”Father, I am asking Thee to help me be tolerant of those who have different opinions than mine, and still not surrender in any way the convictions thou hast given me from Thy Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 14:19 *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”*

AN “EDIFIER.”

To edify, build up and come alongside another is a blessing to both people involved. One is blessed in receiving and the other blessed in giving. There is no way to lose when we are following after the right things. Ruth followed after her mother-in-law whose family was disintegrated by the mistakes of unbelief, deception and bitterness. Yet Naomi was willing to trust God for a new beginning. She was no long willing to stare at the wall, but got up and opened the door to a new tomorrow. She wasn't the greatest example in everything, but Ruth was willing to follow after her, because she knew Naomi was going to where the God of Israel promised blessing to His people.

In Isaiah 51 when we look to where we came from; to Abraham and Sarah and where they came from and we see where we are now by the grace of God, we are called by God to “follow after righteousness.” Those like Abraham who was called alone, and blessed and increased; will enjoy the same fellowship with God when righteousness moves us in the path of God's leading. We may not see the city yet but we know that righteousness dwells there and so we follow after it.

The Lord's people in Corinth were told to follow after charity (love) and desire spiritual gifts that would enable them to edify others. That is why gifts have been given to the body and to the church in local areas – that God's people will be edified. The gifts given and used properly will be to “edification, exhortation and comfort.” Following after love makes happen, what normally wouldn't happen. Follow the leading of love, and others will be blessed and bless you.

Paul knew he was on a course of God's choosing as he worked and preached and prayed his way across the Middle East and Europe. He followed after that which God had called him and challenged him with. He knew he hadn't attained to the full accomplishment of his work and the maturity of the work he desired, but he kept at it until the day he died.

He in turn, urged Timothy to follow after every one of those attributes that make a child of God what he should be. To follow after righteousness means I follow in the path of righteous Abraham. To follow after godliness will mean I will follow the steps of Paul. To follow after patience will cause me to sit in silence for a week while I empathize with Job. To follow after meekness means I will walk alongside of Joshua as we follow Moses through the testing times of life in the wilderness.

All of these will make for peace among us and growth within the lives of each one blessed by an “edifier.”

“O Father in heaven: far too often my steps are following the wrong footprints. Of all the ones that call us to follow, let the voice that makes it happen in my life, be the voice of the One who said, “Follow Me...” I learn from the lives and words of others, but the real learning comes when His yoke is on me. Then meekness, lowliness and all other things that make for peace, will be real in my life. In the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 14:7-21

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

It is a reason for my concern that I remember I am not an independent person, but live an interdependent life - both affected by those around me and affecting those around me. There are principles of conduct I must consider in everything I do that have consequences on me and others. Not all Christians are alike in their faith. The law of love constrains me to accept my brothers and sisters in spite of varying cultural and personal bias that we might have. Some things though, are fundamental in the practice of holy and loving Christian fellowship.

It is always wrong for me to be conformed to the world. No matter who I am and where I have come from, "love of the world is enmity with God." The cosmos and the ecclesia are two entirely different social systems under two totally opposite leaders. The "god of this world" world is Satan. The "Head of the Church" is the Lord Jesus Christ. I am to be transfigured from the world and its ways by the renewing of my mind [Ro. 12:1-2].

Another principle of conduct as it relates to my brothers and sisters in Christ is that I am not to have a condemning attitude toward them. I may have a different opinion than my fellow-believers about certain things such as what I eat, what I do on the Lord's Day or who I show friendship toward. But this does not give me the right to condemn them for their different ways or thoughts. The Lord Jesus was condemned by some when He was here for eating "with publicans and sinners." Some may not want to do that even today. I am not to condemn them for not doing that even if I choose to do so [Ro.14:1-3].

A principle that I need to keep constantly before me is that my convictions must be based on the Word of God. The Word of God does not allow some things (theft, homosexuality, adultery) even though society today overlooks those things, and in some parts of society, condones and even promotes them. Whether I accept them or not is not up to me. These are condemned by the Word of God. When the Word of God is silent on a matter such as the food I eat, the work I do, the place I live or other matters of personal opinion, then I am not allowed to condemn or reject that person because of a difference of opinion. The issue involved here is whether the conduct is condemned by scripture or allowed by one's conscience. The overriding decision in a matter is whether one is able and willing to own the Lordship of Christ in it. We are to live our life to the Lord, and if my conduct leads me to die for my convictions, I am able to die owning Jesus as my Lord. He died that he might be Lord of those who live for Him or die for Him [Ro.14:4-9].

To be considerate of one another in the family of God is expected. There is One who knows the motivation behind every action and opinion of His people. I am accountable to my Lord Jesus Christ for what I do or not do - not to other people. When a brother or sister takes an action that is one I cannot participate in, I am not given the right to insist that what is being done is wrong if there is no scriptural injunction against it. In the same way, if what I want to do will knowingly offend others, then I should be considerate and refrain from that action or activity. My decision is to be based on whether it will stumble another person, not only on if I want to do it. The Lord knows my heart and there will be a time when I put into words before Him at the judgment seat, the motivation behind the actions that I take [Ro.14:10-13].

Sometimes there may be a decision made on one occasion that is quite inconsistent with actions taken on another. A basic principle of conduct is that I be consistent in the things I do. I know what freedom in Christ is and I also know what freedom of conscience is. The two go together. My freedom in Christ does not free me to ignore or grieve the conscience of another person. My liberty is to be controlled by the Spirit of God who give me the higher responsibility of acting in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. In love, I am to not to do anything that would turn another person aside from their walk of faith in Christ, even if it is weak faith. My liberty in Christ must be used with care so that my walk in the Spirit, and my brother or sister's walk will not in any way be hindered [Ro.14:14-17].

Constructive conduct is another basic principle in my life in the Lord. When one's walk in serving Christ is pleasing to Him, it will be approved by those around who know a righteous walk when they see it. There is an expectation that believers are righteous in their lives, not just religious professors. Even when those may oppose and persecute, there is an underlying approval. Constructive conduct has a way of building up respect and approval from those who watch the lives of believers with a critical eye. By following hard after peace and hunting it down, will keep me from engaging in on-going differences of opinion that led us nowhere in maintaining good fellowship. To edify another, builds that person up, and will promote strength and spiritual well-being [Ro.14:18-19].

I do have to be careful of the consciences of others, not just my own. A fundamental principle of Christian conduct is that I am going to be sensitive to the consciences of other. It is wrong for me to ride rough-shod over what may be important to another person, even though it is of little importance to me. I do not want my brother to have a spiritual fall. I do not want to place a snare in the path of his Christian life and testimony. It is wrong for me to use my liberty in front of him until he can see the value of himself. So, I may have to wait awhile and be cautious in using the blessing of my liberty until he is taught by the Spirit of God.

There is a joy I have in Christ, that of Christian liberty.
However, some though they are saved, have found this hard to see.
So, in respect for them as family, some things I will not do -
Until I know the Holy Spirit has been able to teach them too.

It is not only wrong, but it is not nice for me to ignore their pain.
If I for my own selfish reason hurt them, what will be my gain?
I will not have strengthened them and may be the cause of them to fall.
If that happens what would I say if on me for help they call?

No, I will not choose to follow the ways of the world, nor conform to it.
Nor will I condemn my fellow believers who find it hard to submit
To the way we know Christian life to be lived, until they are further grown.
My convictions won't help them at all unless they become their own.

What I believe and pass on to others, must be Bible-based.
Also, I must remember to be considerate of those who come from a different place.
Their conscience may be sensitive because of habits and traditions formed
When they were trying to please other people and to a system conform.

By God's grace when I live consistently and base what I do on God's Word,
The time will come as a result of consistent conduct, they will know the Lord.
When we died and rose in Christ, free from the law of sin and death -
We found liberty in Christ a higher motive for living than laws that people set.

I don't want to trample on another man's conscience, I want to live constructively.
If I can do that in a Christ-like way, I think the weaker in faith will see
That God Himself has made us free to walk in this life of faith.
Our conscience is freed from vain traditions when we appreciate the results of grace.

"Father, with gratitude for what Thou hast allowed me to experience, I humbly ask that I will be guided to be Christ-like in all my dealings with others. Please keep me from being patronizing or condescending in my attitude to anyone lest they be stumbled in their faith. Help me to be sensitive and compassionate toward those who have been freed from bondage of whatever kind it may have been. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 14:19. *"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and wherewith one may edify another."*

FOLLOW AFTER.

Some things by themselves are not harmful
But if I insist on everything my way it is shameful
In the kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit guides to things helpful
And I myself have to remember - before God I am accountable.

My liberty does require that everything I do will edify
I need to consider what helps others more than myself satisfy
The work of God in which I have a part, must God glorify
So, the influence I have on others should purify.

May I be willing for fellowship's sake let some things go
And in love for a weak brother - never certain things do
For he might have a conscience against things I allow
And by faith and for his faith's sake be willing at times to say, "No."

If he does what he thinks is wrong -
And I don't do some thing because I think I'm strong
Then it will be a problem for us to get along
So in acceptance or denial - I'll go on.

"I know, Father, all my brothers are not the same. Some are weak and others are strong in the Lord. I do get impatient at times with the ones who see something wrong in every little detail. I am asking for patience to consider them in a reasonable way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 15:1-7

OBLIGATIONS

Those who heard this letter read and understood its teaching, were some of those who would be considered strong in faith along with the apostle Paul. There are obligations that go along with spiritual understanding. When one is "overtaken by a fault," the spiritual ones are to seek him out and recover him. When one is burdened with the cares of life and the deceitfulness of those around him, the strong one is to draw near and shoulder that load. It is not that we are to put up with the wrong doing of others or simply say, "we will pray for you," but move alongside that neighbor, and for his benefit do what is necessary for him.

The best example of how the strong meet the needs of the weak is our Lord Jesus Christ. The good He did for those who were hungry was simply that He fed them. Those who were outcast, He befriended. Those who were hurting, He eased their pain and provided healing. Those who had suffered losses and were

emotionally distraught, He came alongside to comfort. What others should have borne; He bore. We learn in our hearts to have compassion as He had compassion for those who were "like sheep without a shepherd." Patience was personified in the Lord Jesus and it is expected that we wait for God to work with confident assurance and trust, knowing He is the One who truly fulfills the needs of others through us when we meet our obligations. When we read the scriptures, we are comforted even in times of distress, knowing that God has a plan He is bringing to pass. When we learn from Him, we find the blessing of "hope" that is based on His promises.

The written Word of God reveals the character of our God that never changes. He who was patient and encouraging in the past, is the same today and enables us to be of one mind toward each other, whether strong or weak. Even though there are differences of opinion, varying degrees of experience in the life of faith and differing gifts that may potentially cause disunity, all of the saints of God have one common purpose - we want to see God glorified and honored among His people and in the world. This desire motivates us to receive each other - not for what we get out of it, but to bring glory and praise to God. When we receive one another, it has a much higher objective than what makes me comfortable or what I want to get out of this fellowship myself. This is to be to the glory of God! What honor is given to Him when unified saints worship Him! What praise and worship in Spirit and in truth, rises to the throne of God when old and young, strong and weak, unite in holy convocation and with one voice glorify Him! What a blessed obligation!

Some may not know the tunes and words, for this is new to them.
When the saints in unison join voices to sing a hymn
Of worship and adoration and in fellowship, express
A oneness that we all can share as we our Savior bless.

The words expressed in audible ways or in the silence of full hearts,
Join together in one orderly paean of praise for blessings God imparts.
Some words may be child-like when spoken, others more profound -
But when they are put together as the Spirit guides, they are a grateful holy sound.

What one might say promotes a thought that is enhanced in silent prayer.
It started as a germ of thought that is breathed out into heavenly air.
Watching, listening angels, a holy God and saints who are already home -
Hear and rejoice when the weak and strong gather and worship as one.

The glory and the honor, the praise and the holy respect,
Given in reverential fear we never should neglect.
One comes with orderly thoughts that are scripturally learned -
Another with first-life emotions praises because of grace unearned.

When the weak and the strong, the old and the young, all the women and men -
Who sharing in meeting needs, now come together to give worship and praise to Him -
There is a rich fellowship because we've accepted each other in the Lord.
Our oneness in Christ manifests itself, so that together we bring glory to God.

"Father, I thank Thee today for the blessings all of us Thy people have received from Thee when we support each other and build one another up in our holy faith. There are weak among us in our fellowship who through no fault of their own are losing their capacity for worship and service. May the strong among us not be satisfied to see them struggling, but meet their needs. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 15:1-2. *"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."*

THE STRONG.

Paul, as a man of God was one of the strong. He recognized the obligation he had toward those to whom he ministered and among whom he lived. As a man of strength, he had roles to fill that would enable him to fill the needs he knew were among the people of his generation.

PRIEST, v.16. The results of his work for the Lord, were Gentiles who were able to bring glory to God. He offered them up to God as an offering of the very best he could give to the Lord. He held nothing back for self-glory of any kind.

PREACHER, v.17-19. To fully preach the Gospel in an area is a high recommendation for any preacher. A whole generation of people is without excuse when that happens. It would mean that every place along that road had an opportunity to hear the life-giving message. That is successful preaching.

PIONEER, v.20. There are places untouched by a clear Gospel presentation, that are in every country of the world. When the call to reach out to new places comes, may the pioneer be ready and willing to go. Moving

out of the comfort zone is an essential step for the pioneer. Most pioneers have learned the value of moving into new country from older ones who have done that kind of work before themselves. Help me to help others reach out to regions beyond.

PURPOSE, v.28. Paul wanted to be a blessing to other people no matter who they were. He had plans made but these were always subject to God's will and timing. Purpose in life makes each day a meaningful opportunity to be a benefit to others.

PRAY-ERS, v.30. Having the assurance that other people are praying with you is a powerful incentive to be fervent in prayer yourself. Paul wanted to be delivered from his enemies; he wanted his service to be accepted by the believers; he wanted to be refreshed by believers when he was helping them. It is very helpful to let other "pray-ers" know of needs so they can participate in the work through prayer.

"I know, gracious Father, the benefit of having strong believers come along side and strengthen me. This has been invaluable in times of great need. Now I can see how important it is for me to meet the needs of others. Help me to be observant and ready to strengthen those around me today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 15:8-13

STRONG AND WEAK

When people are first saved there is not a lot that they understand about the doctrine of salvation. The strong will not convince them by driving them into accepting the truth. It calls for real consideration on the part of both strong and weak. The strong can help a weak brother or sister by guiding them in the Word of God and prayer. The weak should face their need and accept the accountability that will help them to grow into the person God wants them to be.

We can let our pride keep us from giving or accepting help from others. The cost of self-denial has to be paid by both the strong and weak so that our life in Christ will be what He intends. The Lord Jesus was a minister of the Jews in His life of prayer indicating His awareness of His dependence on the Father as He persevered in the holiness of His life to please the Father and do His will. As He ministered, He accepted people for who they were. He gave value and dignity to the worth of every person and they came to trust Him. That is the template of living we are to use.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to minister to His own people the Jews, but they would not receive Him. We who are Gentiles are in the number of "as many as received Him," who are made "children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." He was willing to accept us in spite of our weakness and alienation from Him. Now the strong are to accept the weak by the grace that has been shown to us.

The Gentiles now have the Almighty God ministering for us in our weakness and need. Gentiles have been brought under His divine mercy and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ without the connection with the Jews. Now all of us apart from background or personal strength can trust that the treasures of God's grace will be unfolding before us forever. God gives us the blessing of joy; He fills us with peace; He gave us the Holy Spirit who empowers us to claim these blessings in Christ. He imparts the ability to believe on Him who He sent. The facts that God reveals about us enables us to live the Christian life with real trust. As believers hope is a normal state for everyone who, is a believer. God is the God of hope. He fills us with joy and peace when we genuinely believe in Him. Believing in the heart involves a true surrender of the will.

In conscious awareness of what it would mean -

The Lord came here to earth.

His own people would not receive Him -

Though He deliberately came to them first.

So now His grace extends afar -

To any who on Him will believe.

The weak and the strong whoever they are -

With open arms and heart God receives.

The God of hope fill with joy and peace

Everyone who comes to Him.

It is not in vain the riches of His grace -

Gives joy that in them remains.

The Holy Spirit is the One with power -

To fill hearts of the strong and weak.

Jews and Gentiles meld into one -

When the mind and will of God we seek.

“Father of Jews and Gentiles who personally come to Thee in faith: I praise Thee for this wonderful benediction to the marvelous truths of the Gospel. The unfolding and explanations of the Gospel of Thy grace in the book of Romans is certainly made clear and powerful by the work of the Holy Spirit. I am so thankful that I have found joy and peace in believing through the blessing of the God of hope. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 15:14. *“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”*

A CARING MAN.

Paul, as a brother to brothers and sisters he has not seen, speaks to them as equals. He is not claiming a higher status as a man because he is a well-educated Jew. He gives something like a benediction or a hymn as he speaks of the greatest joy and peace in the world that comes through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a man who interested in the well-being of his brothers and sisters, he took his role as a preacher and teacher of the Gentiles. He looks upon the Gentiles as a priest would look upon a special burnt offering and he presents them to God as a result of his Gospel work.

Following that, he takes his place as a preacher who has responsibility to make the Gospel message clear and plain wherever he goes – and God gave proof of his preaching.

Then as a pioneer, he points to places he opened up to the Gospel and preached the salvation message – as new fields and new building. He wasn't following up on someone else's work but had his work to do for God.

I see him therefore as:

- A brother who cares
- A priest who offers up fruit of his labor
- A preacher who is responsible to make the Gospel plain
- A pioneer who is reaching out to new places and unreached people

I think the Roman believers would have appreciated his interest in them more than ever. He had opened himself up to them so that even though they had not met him, they would feel like they knew him.

“I read about this dear brother, O God, and would like to follow his example, as a man, assembly believers can trust and have good fellowship with. I pray of Thee to give me a heart of compassion and interest like his for the people of my generation and place. May I never take God's people for granted or in any way think I am superior to any of them. I pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

ROMANS 15:14-21

THEM THAT ARE STRONG

How can I know about people that I have never met and even be able to assist them and minister to their needs? Reputation is being made constantly whether it is the reputation of an individual or a group of believers. Every action and decision have some effect on those who are affected by it. Another way I can know people is by the fact that all believers appreciate the grace of God. That is one thing all true Christians have in common. The reputation of goodness is passed on from one group of people to another as they catch the vision of the Lord's will from each other. Knowledge and honesty between us is not something to ever take for granted.

There is no question that the evidence of God's grace in brothers and sisters in Christ affects our lives in the assembly we are a part of or in the calling we have been given. Paul was known among the saints as the minister to the Gentiles. He knew part of His strength was to be a priest ministering the Gospel to the Gentiles and offering himself on their behalf by being set aside for their benefit by the Holy Spirit. To be able to tell people of the blessings of the Gospel is an amazing privilege for anyone. So, Paul was able to boldly tell others of the grace God had shown to him in allowing him to make reference to God using him in preaching the Gospel. He was not glorying in this for self-centered reasons.

As priests we too intercede for others. Paul was also a preacher of the Gospel of Christ. When anyone can speak for God, that person has been given a very responsible work for God. Not only do we represent

others as a priest and seek to reach them as a preacher, but in reaching out to others areas as yet untouched, we are involved in the work of pioneering - of opening new doors for the Gospel.

Involved in being one who supposed to be strong in the Lord as a priest, preacher and pioneer - is also the need of having a stated purpose of bearing lasting fruit for the glory of God. And to this end, even the strongest believer recognizes the absolutely essential need of fervent, urgent, effective prayer. He must be committed to this and also needs the benefit of having others who will pray along with him for successful work in reaching others for the kingdom of God.

What is the work of a present-day priest?
To claim power to forgive sins is a common deceit.
The biblical priest is willing to offer up himself
That sinners in danger will be delivered from hell.

What is the work of a preacher, what can he say -
That will make people understand Jesus is the only Way?
He must speak the truth in love, telling of God's grace.
And charge people with the responsibility to believe in faith.

What does the pioneer do that others don't do?
He reaches out to new places - and before he is through,
He is sure God brought him to that place no matter what the result -
Whatever God does through him, in God's name he exalts.

What is the purpose of this life I live?
It is my earnest hope that to my Lord I can give
Some lasting fruit from service done for Him alone -
And He will be greatly glorified when my work is done.

What is the reason for praying - doesn't God already know;
The outcome of every action; the fruit of every seed I sow?
It is not vain activity to be in constant fellowship with God.
He is the One who can add real blessing to His Word.

"Father of love and God of all grace: it is with a sense of need that I come to Thee to ask for Thy strength to be made perfect in my weakness. May I be in some way able to give some strength to others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 15:22-33

PLANS

Ambition is not just the desire to reach for the top and be successful in the eyes of people around us. There is a holy ambition that is very commendable when one is ambitious in their service for the Lord. There is something very special when the Spirit of God guides one to take the truth of the Gospel to areas where they are not building on the work of others. That does not mean there is no undone work in cities or areas of North America. There are as many or more unreached people in this area of the world as there are in many other countries. Like Paul had plans for his service of God in his day, so we have the privilege and joy of laying plans according to the will of God in our day.

Whether Paul ever got to Spain is uncertain but he did get to Rome in a way he probably didn't expect or at least plan for. Making plans is not wrong. It is just that we must be willing to submit to the fact that our will is to be subservient to God's will. In the service of the Lord we can be ambitious for reaching out with the Gospel, helping believers grow in their faith and meeting material needs of others without these being conflicting plans.

The new believers in Paul's day were willing to support those who had sent Paul to them to preach the Gospel to them. There never was a request made by those who preached the Gospel for the "support" of those in their home assembly. The plans to fulfill the mandate the Lord gave to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel" is reason enough for us to press ahead with our plans.

"The fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ" is our empowerment to carry out those God-given plans. Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to know he was going to Rome and that he would be going with a work for God to fulfill. It is never wise for us to pre-plan how we expect God to complete the work He calls us to. We act in faith as a result of knowing that prayer works in our service for God. Our privilege is to move ahead confidently in faith to the call of God. Then we can rest assured the God of peace will be with us.

Uncertainty is not uncommon
But God is the same
To press ahead in faith is right
Even when we don't know what is next
Plans are not wrong to make
God's will is what is important
People are waiting to hear
We have been given the message to tell
The love of the Spirit is a motivation
People need you to speak for God
To pray with others is to share in power
The Holy Spirit intercedes
There is joy in doing God's will
He has promised to be with you

"I praise Thee, Father for working Thy will through Thy unprofitable servant. May I not leave undone that for which Thou hast called me. Help me to meet Thy expectations. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 16:1. *"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is in Cenchrea:"*

COMMENDABLE.

"Who will do this? Why haven't they done that? Can't they see that something has to be done? That has been broken for months and nobody has fixed it! There isn't any love in this place!" How often words like this are thrown about by those whose contribution is to warm a seat for an hour on Sunday morning. They claim to be "part of this fellowship" but no one has seen the inside of their house. They know all the things that are wrong in their eyes. They know what has to be done but never do it. For some reason, their whole effort in life is to make sure they are comfortable. "I don't feel comfortable here. We are going somewhere else where we can be more comfortable."

But look there – see that lady? She has been sitting quietly in that seat for years. No one hardly notices her at first. Visitors come in and have sat through the meeting. When it is over, they stand and head for the door. That little lady is there before them with a quiet smile waiting to greet them. How did she get there first? She knows what it like to be a stranger and overlooked so she eased out of her seat just before the final "Amen" and is there waiting to ask them to her home for a meal. Her ways are such that they feel comfortable, and her genuine interest is not faked. "I have to take a couple of people home first, but I will be back here shortly and show you the way to my house." A widow is standing nearby, and she too is included in the invitation. A quick glance around the parking lot shows most people leaving or have already left, and two more are glancing furtively about. She calls out to them, "You are coming to my house for dinner today, aren't you?" They look at each other and nod, "Thank you very much." She is a "succorer of many." She is commendable.

A man and his wife make it a point to meet with the folks down the street at least once a week. They also have assumed responsibility for providing a meeting place – their own home. An articulate teacher came by their assembly and spoke very well – but there was a problem – some of what he said wasn't quite right. So, they ask him home for dinner, and then explained to him what was really the way things were. He listened and learned and probably was very thankful for that man and his wife. They paid their way, and helped a full-time worker who needed some work for awhile to meet his obligations, by having him work with them. They went right to the wire for Paul and did everything they did with a full heart – they didn't hold back. They are commendable.

The first one saved in one place, stayed with the work all the way through. Even though it probably happened there, like every place else, that some who jump on the bandwagon at first when all is going good jumped off at the first sign of opposition. Another lady kept supplying all the needed labor to keep the Lord's servants able to keep at the work of the Gospel. Some brethren were willing to go to jail rather than compromise the truth of God for which they were responsible. Family members who support those who press ahead with the work of the Lord; people who open their homes to the Lord's people; those who there when you need them – all of these are commendable.

God help me to be commendable in some way. There is so much to be done that I can do. So many people to help that I can help. I would like to hear when this is all finished, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

"Father, my times are in Thy hands. Each day I would like to have accomplished something that is commendable. I am most concerned that it is commendable to

Thee, but I wouldn't mind if it could also be commendable to others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 16:1-16

COMMENDATION

What is it that enables one to gain the approval of others? To express in words things that are praiseworthy of another person cannot be done in any way that is less than the honest truth. When a person has been proved trustworthy because of the activities and acts of assistance done on behalf of others, then that approval can be defined and put into readable words. The sister in the Lord, Phoebe, who served the assembly in Cenchrea near Corinth, was notable for her hospitality and commitment to the well-being of the saints that met there. She was a helper herself, and now it was her turn to be helped.

A letter with the name of such a committed servant of God such as Phoebe, is not something to be considered lightly or of little value. The evaluation of one's attitude and personal service is made by more than one person. Each of us is daily leaving behind us a trail that will be either commendable or blamable.

Those whose names are listed here, are noted by their willingness to be counted in their own sphere of service for the Lord by the apostle Paul, who could write what the Spirit of God saw was being done by them. Nothing of what we do can be thought of as being overlooked. The list of people at the conclusion of this epistle indicates that the Gospel being explained to the Roman believers was being lived out by people in their very midst. To be used as an example of what God's intention is of His people, is a great privilege and honor. Any labor for the Lord is of value to the saints of God wherever they are found. Couples working together for the Lord, faithful sisters and trustworthy brethren are always worthy of our commendation from one assembly to another. These postscripts on the pages of divine inspiration should awaken in each of us a desire to be found faithful in whatever service for the Lord we have been called to do.

To be a helper of the saints of God is to be a helper of the Lord.
"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these," we read in His holy Word,
We have done that service unto Him and He of that work takes due note -
So in a day yet in the future, the results of that labor He will show.

Hospitality is a work that in many places is never done.
The only ones to enter there are parents, or daughters and sons.
Strangers pass by looking for a place that will show them hospitality -
Those angels that report back to their Master will tell Him what they see.

Some faithful laborers do the tasks that others will not do.
Even though unsung by men, the Master honors them when they're through.
Others find themselves bound in chains almost forgotten by the saints.
But He who sees in every place strengthens their spirits lest they faint.

Week by week their home is opened for the saints to come and meet.
They are not complaining when each of the saints that enter they greet.
As the church in the home gathers to remember the Lord, or sing or pray -
They count it a privilege to be allowed by God to serve Him in this way.

We don't know all that is going on among the saints of God -
But this postscript does remind us that we are serving a risen Lord
Who knows every action and attitude and considers what is done
As done unto Him as well as others and will give honor to each one.

"All-knowing Father, each of those who have shown hospitality to us over the last months is one of Thy own people. Bless them I pray for what they have done for us and how they have provided so much for us. Honor them for honoring Thee. Some of their children have turned away from Thy trust. Turn them again to Thyself that they may hear Thy Gospel and be saved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 16:17-20

FALSE OR TRUE

Smooth talkers and deceivers have always been around trying to undermine God's truth and deceive His people. Books that are written and deceitful words spoken sometimes seem to be reasonable at first. There are deadly foes aligned against God's people. They are enemies of the plain Gospel that has been expounded in the book of Romans. Many will claim to have newer and better "revelations" of the Word of God than we have in the scriptures themselves.

Do not give place to them. Do not investigate their teachings to try and find some good in them. "If that light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The scriptures are plain: "Avoid them," "keep away from them," "touch not the unclean thing," and there are other injunctions to heed lest we be contaminated by their teaching or even associating with them. The beautiful, trusting innocence of new believers is often misguided and misled into a mixture of law and grace, works added to faith, modern thought with scriptural simplicity.

Behind the confusion that results from giving heed to these smooth-talking people is an implacable enemy - Satan, who is either disguised as an angel of light, or challenging truth as a roaring lion. The day is coming when Satan will be crushed beneath the feet of the saints of God. God will do this by means of using the truth of His Word and the Gospel of peace. It is the "God of peace" who will bring this to pass. We cannot expect to be free from these challenges against God's free grace until this age is past and the Lord calls us home. We are to be alert and aware of the various forms of opposition we will be called upon to face.

The benediction promising the blessing of grace reminds us that the One who was rich and for our sakes became poor, has made us rich by His grace. That grace comes from God through the Lord Jesus Christ and is passed on to us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

They are gone to some far and distant land
They are there it is true, but are also close at hand
To interfere and challenge, their purpose is to defeat -
And will be successful to a point if we aren't at the mercy-seat.

Strength is given and does apply to efforts made to defend
The truth of God that smooth talkers challenge, when on God we depend.
We know what is right, for the scriptures give what is divine light
Our response to deceitful men is to avoid them, not to fight.

To use our efforts to win an argument gives to their platform an ear.
When public conflict arises, passers by will stop to hear
The two opinions and then will choose, based on what seems right to them
Instead of being taught by the Spirit and the Word, guided into truth by Him.

"Good words and fair speeches" appeal to the natural man who won't face his sin.
Honest words giving God's own truth are resisted when they condemn him.
To debate what is true can sometimes defeat the purpose of Gospel preaching,
Because people don't like discomfort, and will be attracted by false teaching.

Behind all of this it is easy to see a power there that is stronger than men.
Satan will deceive in whatever way possible; our appeal is to One stronger than him.
Greater is He that in us than he that is in the world.
We are to obey our Master, that the flag of God's truth will be unfurled.

Some things we must leave up to God and go about our given tasks.
We are to be ready to give an answer when an honest seeker asks.
But to engage in contentious arguments is not our work, we leave to God alone -
What needs to be done knowing that His truth will always take the throne.

"Father, this benediction is such an encouragement because it makes plain that these religious contentions will not be going on too long. I look anxiously for the day when the Lord will crush Satan and the laborers will all be safely home. Even so, come Lord Jesus! Amen."

ROMANS 16:21-24

FRIENDS AND FELLOWLABORERS

The book of Romans begins with sin and ends with those who believe, being solidly established in faith by the Gospel. It opens up with the subject of righteousness and ends with examples of righteous persons who are identified by the writer. It tells of the past and future glory of Israel and concludes with a list of Jews and Gentiles who illustrate the oneness in the Body of Christ. It tells of the problems that arise in a fellowship of believers who gather in the name of the Lord and ends with brethren united in common cause - the spread of the Gospel and the blessings of the blood-bought Church of God.

To be a "workfellow" puts one in a place of sharing in the labor of the Gospel that lasts, and the blessings of the Gospel that brings many into the kingdom of God. What joy and rejoicing there is when friends and

fellow-laborers communicate over the results of their labors for the Lord. The man in whose home these friends are gathered is one who wanted the others to know of his interest in them as well. This man with a large heart of compassion and kindness, would have counted it a privilege to serve this company of friends, fellow-workers and servants of God.

It is always a cause for gratitude when brothers and sisters come together to talk over the things of the Lord. When we are able to share with others what God is doing in our lives, we encourage them in what they are doing for the Lord as well. Our labors are not always the same. But when each fills his or her God-given role, there is cause to praise God and thank Him for what He is doing through the united efforts of His people. "To God be the glory, great things He has done."

I don't know all my brothers and sisters do,
But I can always rejoice -
That He who sent them to labor for Him -
Sometimes lets me hear their voice
As they trace the hand of God with them,
And the results of their laboring days.
When I hear these things, then from my heart
Comes the desire to give God praise.

One may be laboring along with others -
Another has to work alone.
Some may see a gradual work -
Others may see a lot done.
But all can rejoice together -
Because it is God that gives the increase.
There is no reason for self-applause -
To God we give all the praise.

In one city near and another afar off,
In countries to many unknown -
Comes the reports of laborers to our ears
As to what is needed and what is being done.
My heart is lifted up in thanks
As I think of their laboring days.
And know that when the laborers are all home,
To God they will give all thanks and praise.

"Gracious God, my Father: for the faithful laborers in Thy vineyard, for the fellowship of those "who stay by the stuff," for the unknown servants, for those who stand out publicly for Thee - I give Thee thanks and praise. For who they are and what they have accomplished for the furtherance of the kingdom of God - may they all find their joy in Thee when they are able to find some time to rest from their labors. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

ROMANS 16:25-27

ESTABLISHED

God, was in the past, and still is today able to establish His people through the preaching of the Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ to the nations. A settled condition of a person in regards to the teachings of the commandment of the eternal God, stabilizes that person so they are not moved about or manipulated by anyone who might come against him.

This epistle begins with showing the awfulness of man's sin and the condemnation it brings on all of us. It goes on to explain the truth of salvation by grace alone apart from works. Then points out that by the most available means to every person, faith, they can come into the good of that salvation now. The law and its purpose is clarified. The blessings that have come through Christ are clearly defined so we can know all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ have been made partakers of God's great salvation, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. The indwelling Holy Spirit is able to reveal the scriptures to us that God's purposes for us are made clear. The "only wise God" is certainly glorified in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Gospel has clarified God's purposes and all nations of the earth have been shown the way faith works and what pleases God. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Paul knew much more was going to be passed on to the saints of God by subsequent epistles. This letter made clear the basis of God's salvation and opens the door to further truths that have been laid out and unfolded through the order we find the books in the New Testament. God's wisdom and ways are surely past finding out, but when He reveals

Himself and His will to us through the scriptures, we can only bow in humility and awe at the amazing grace of our God to us!

What gracious unfolding of God's Gospel are in these pages to read!
What marvelous insights God gives to me, when to what I read, I heed!
Even as I follow these pages of truth, I sense what I really need -
Is to give to the only wise God all glory!

Because I will never be able to fully grasp the depths of God's salvation,
But I do rejoice because I am in Christ, I will never be brought into condemnation.
When I take time to review and consider this, it results in my sanctification -
That I might give the only wise God all the glory!

How the truth unfolds in laying out the problem of sin and its consequences -
And then continues to reveal the just and legal holy sentences -
That are passed on man, but have through Christ been full dealt recompenses -
Then I give the only wise God all the praise and glory!

I find the barriers that have been raised by men, by One Man have been brought down -
And available to all mankind is forgiveness of sin when Christ as Lord they own -
So, in the presence of God on my behalf, I have a High Priest before God's throne -
And from a full heart I give to the only wise God, all the worship and praise and glory!

Now I have been made a part of a kingdom of priests who can personally give God praise -
We join together in small groups now and words of thanks and hymns we raise -
What a joy it will be in the future when God's children through endless day -
All from full heart as a glorified throng, give the only wise God all the glory!

"I thank Thee Father, for reminding me again of the value and importance of the Gospel. May I never, by Thy gracious guidance, ever compromise in any way these life-changing truths. I know eternal souls are in the balance and I dare not lead them astray. I place my faith in Thee and Thy Word alone. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."