


**A**  
**COMPREHENSIVE**  
**VIEW OF**  
**ROMANS**

**VOL. I**



**W.E. BEST**

# **A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF ROMANS**

## **Volume I**

by  
**W. E. Best**

Copyright © 1992  
W. E. Best

Scripture quotations in this book designated “NASB” are from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, and 1977 by the Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission. Those designated “translation” are by the author and taken from the Greek Text. All others are from the King James Bible.

**This book is distributed by the  
W. E. Best Book Missionary Trust  
P. O. Box 34904  
Houston, Texas 77234-4904 USA**

---

## **CONTENTS**

Introduction

Panoramic View of Romans

### **SECTION I**

#### **PAUL'S PRELUDE TO THE EPISTLE**

*Romans 1:1-17*

1 Authentication And Salutation - *Romans 1:1-7*

2 Commendation, Aspiration, And Obligation - *Romans 1:8-16*

3 The Theme Of Romans - *Romans 1:17*

### **SECTION II**

#### **CONDEMNATION**

*Romans 1:18-3:20*

4 Precursory

5 Corruption And Condemnation Of The Gentiles - *Romans 1:18-32*

6 Guilt And Condemnation Of The Jews - *Romans 2*

7 God's Just Judgment On Depraved Jews And Gentiles - *Romans 3:1-18*

## INTRODUCTION

Every person in whom the Spirit of life dwells is expected to have an extensive mental grasp of the principle of life which comes from God the Father, through Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. The Father chose certain ones in Christ and gave His Son as an offering for sin to pay the debt for those He chose out from among mankind. The Son died for them, and the Holy Spirit applies that which the Father planned and the Son purchased. Hence, God has come to us through the Son and by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14). Then, we in turn go to the Father by the Holy Spirit of regeneration, made possible through and by Jesus Christ at Calvary.

Having heard about the Ephesian saints' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul prayed that God might give them a spirit of wisdom and disclosure of truth in the sphere of a full knowledge of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:17). The noun *epignosis* means coming to a definite spiritual understanding of Jesus Christ. Paul was praying in God's will, because he knew that God had permanently enlightened (perfect passive participle of *photidzo*) their mental and spiritual understanding that they might have a permanent knowledge (perfect active infinitive of *oida*) of what is the hope of God's calling (Eph. 1:18). This calling is by the sovereign God (II Tim. 1:9), in Christ (Phil. 3:14), according to God's purpose (Rom. 8:28), irrevocable (Rom. 11:29), personal (Luke 19:5), by means of the gospel (II Thess. 2:14), and those called are commanded to spare no effort to make our calling sure (II Pet. 1:10).

There is absolutely no excuse for Christians to say they have neither time nor opportunity for an extensive and exhaustive study of so great a deliverance by Christ's redemptive work at Calvary. Our salvation comes out of eternity, travels through time, and goes back to eternity. This "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3) covers God's purpose from eternal election to the eternal kingdom. Romans has been called Paul's Body of Divinity, signifying that the Epistle is the most systematic of all his writings. Its systematic content should be known by rote for the purpose of meditation. The far-reaching effects of a thorough study of Romans will be evident in the lives of Christians.

Since God has set everlasting existence (*olam*, eternity, everlasting, or forever) in the heart of man (Eccl. 3:11), the things of time can never satisfy the human heart. As Proverbs, which records the laws of heaven for life on earth, sets forth the sufficiency of Divine wisdom, Ecclesiastes reveals the insufficiency of human wisdom. In Ecclesiastes, the heart is described as being too large for the object, the things of time. Solomon, the author of both books, was dissatisfied with the things of time, because he tried everything he considered important "under the sun," an expression used 29 times in Ecclesiastes. Although the book presents the world at its best, Solomon did not find satisfaction in science (1:4-11), wisdom under the sun (1:12-18), pleasure (2:1-11), materialism (2:12-26), fatalism—the impersonal character of events (3:1-15), deism—belief in the existence of God on the evidence of human reason alone (3:16-4:16), religion (5:1-8), wealth (5:9-6:12), and morality (7:1-12:12). None of these things satisfy, for the reason that God has set everlasting existence in man's heart. The things of time, which are transitory, can never satisfy. God is referred to only as Creator, not as the covenant God, until chapter 12, verses 13 and 14. These two final verses in Ecclesiastes give the conclusion to the problem of chapter 1, verses 1 through 3, and all the experiences of man "under the sun" (1:4-12:12).

Please notice the word “duty” (12:13) of the KJB and “applied” in the NASB are in italics (supplied words by the translators, but not for emphasis as some foolishly think). Verse 13 may read, “Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole man.” Reverential fear is the whole man. This signifies the man who God alone satisfies. The New Testament proclaims the same principle. Christ said, “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15 NASB). In The Song of Solomon, the infinite object is too large for the finite heart, and this is why Jesus Christ alone can satisfy. The book of Proverbs portrays the sufficiency of Divine wisdom. Ecclesiastes reveals the insufficiency of human wisdom. The Song of Solomon describes the love of God for His people. Thus, an infinite object is necessary to give full contentment to finite everlasting existence in man’s heart.

The Christian is always hungering and thirsting for righteousness because the everlasting life, which he has as the product of Christ’s redemption, is not infinite. The righteousness for which we hunger and thirst is infinite; but the righteousness wrought by Christ in death, which was first imputed to the elect before it is imparted in us, is not the infinite righteous character of God. Our righteousness which is from God is the righteousness which God’s justice demanded. This righteousness was provided in Christ’s perfect obedience to the law and His perfect sacrifice for sin on behalf of the elect. As God cannot create God, the righteousness He provided for the elect cannot be His inherent righteousness. Therefore, the basic principle of this fact is that every effect must have a cause; and the effect will always be inferior to the cause, since God, the first cause by necessity, is greater than His creatures, even His redeemed people. Christians are new creations in Christ, but God made us new creations (II Cor. 5:17).

With these facts before us, we understand why Christians hunger and thirst for righteousness and why God shall display in the coming ages the excelling wealth of His grace in the sphere of kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Matt. 5:6; I Pet. 2:2; Eph. 2:7). The redeemed finite people of God shall forever take their places at the feet of the infinite Savior and Lord. To suggest that believers become “gods” either in time or eternity is heretical. No Christian accepts the doctrine that all who obey the gospel can enter the celestial kingdom and eventually become gods and goddesses.

Paul used the noun righteousness (*dikaiosune*) 36 times in his Epistle to the Romans. It is a legal term which denotes the character of being right. Therefore, no accusation can be brought against a righteous person, whether he is one of the Persons in the Godhead who is inherently righteous, or God’s people who have been made righteous by Christ’s redemptive work at Calvary. Distinction must be made between the righteous God and those He makes righteous in Christ. As there is a distinction between the Creator and man He created, there is a difference between Redeemer and redeemed, Justifier and justified, Sanctifier and sanctified, Begetter and begotten, and Caller and called.

## PANORAMIC VIEW OF ROMANS

The Epistle to the Romans is the most systematic of all Paul's writings. This is not to say there is not an ordered system in his other Epistles, exemplified in Ephesians, but Romans covers a more detailed plan than any of his other Epistles. Let us first get a panoramic view of this great body of divinity. Between the INTRODUCTION, Romans 1:1-17, and the CONCLUSION, Romans 15:14-16:27, there are three major divisions:

### 1. ROMANS 1:18-8:39

Paul gave a doctrinal treatise on condemnation, justification through a God-provided righteousness, practical sanctification, and glorification.

### 2. ROMANS 9:1-11:36

Paul presented an interpretative essay on God's choice, rejection, and restoration of national Israel.

### 3. ROMANS 12:1-15:13

Paul emphasized the practical application of his doctrinal teaching in our duty to God (12:1), ourselves (12:2-3), the assembly (12:4-8), the relative duties to others (12:9-21), civil authority (13:1-7), claims made on us by others with proper motivation in view of a consummated salvation (13:8-14), weak Christians (14:1-15:7), and common courtesy (15:8-13).

The following major truths are taught in this Epistle:

1. Justice requires righteousness (1:18-3:20).
2. Righteousness is revealed (3:21-5:11).
3. Righteousness is realized (5:12-8:13).
4. Righteousness preserves (8:14-39).
5. Righteousness is reflected (12-16).

Without Biblical teaching one cannot expect Biblical living. This means that without a Biblical foundation there will never be a Biblical superstructure. Furthermore, both the foundation and superstructure have a vital connection with Israel. Jesus Christ came through the Davidic line. Salvation is of the Jews. Through God's rejection of Israel, the elect Gentiles have been grafted in. But God is not through with Israel. She shall be restored. Without Israel, we could not enter the kingdom.

The introduction (1:1-17) and conclusion (15:14-16:27) contain much more than salutations. In the introduction, Paul went from authentication and salutation (1:1-7) to his prayer for the saints (1:8, 9), to his desire to personally visit them (1:10-13), to his ministry in Rome (1:14-17). In his conclusion, Paul began where he left off in his introduction. He went from his ministry (15:14-

21), to his journey to them (15:22-29), to urging them to strive with him in prayers on his behalf (15:30-33), and to the salutations (16:1-24). The last three verses record the apostle's benediction (16:25-27).

In the salutations, Romans 16:1-24, sixteen of the twenty-one times in which the Greek verb *aspadzomai*—meaning to greet, salute, or bid farewell—is used, the inflected form is aorist middle imperative. (The verb is also used five times as a present middle indicative.) An imperative is a command. The point is that Jesus Christ gave us a command not only to love one another (John 13:34; 14:15; I John 4:11) but also to be courteous. Christianity is more than doctrine and ordinances; it is a manifestation of love, not sentiment. May we never forget that our loving Christians is our loving those Christ loves.

# SECTION I

## PAUL'S PRELUDE TO THE EPISTLE

*Romans 1:1-17*

Paul's introduction to his Roman Epistle has three major subdivisions:

1. Authentication and salutation - *Romans 1:1-7*
2. Commendation, aspiration, and obligation - *Romans 1:8-16*
3. Theme of the Epistle—the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel -*Romans 1:17*



## AUTHENTICATION AND SALUTATION - *Romans 1:1-7*

### Authentication

Paul was establishing the genuineness of his position in Christ. His authentication includes his name—Paul, his being a slave of Jesus Christ, his call by God as an apostle, and his permanent separation for the gospel which was not hidden in the Old Testament. Confirmation begins with the name, Paul. Paul's Hebrew name was Saul; but Saul was also known by the Gentile name, Paul, which was revealed shortly after his commission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:9). Therefore, the gospel was ordained by God to go by the personal agency of a Jew to non-Jews.

The term *doulos* (slave or servant) means Paul was a slave of Jesus Christ. Some say *doulos* should not be rendered "slave," because that translation excludes the element of free will. Did Paul have any choice concerning his call to the apostleship? He had no more to do with his call to the ministry than with his regeneration. There were no volunteers among the apostles, and there is no surrendering to the ministry subsequent to the apostles because all God-called men have been drafted. Others think Paul used the noun *doulos* in the sense of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, etc., who are called Jehovah's servants. There is nothing in Scripture to contradict the idea of slavery in Paul's acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as his Lord and Master. Hidden in the noun *doulos* is a great truth concerning the nature of true liberty, and that liberty is enslavement to Jesus Christ to whom he belonged by creation and redemption. Such slavery is Christianity.

The word *doulos* expresses the condition of one who is not absolutely free. Paul applied the term to himself (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1). The four masters in the world are sin, self, Satan, and the Savior. In Jesus Christ, Paul was no longer a slave to the other three. He was more than a servant. He was a bondsman, bound by love, to Jesus Christ. Paul's first relationship with God was that of son (regeneration). On the day of his conversion experience, the fruit of regeneration, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). A son does nothing to be saved, but a bondsman must do all to please Him who saved him. While the unregenerate person is compelled to do nothing to be regenerated, after his regeneration, he is impelled to do everything to please his heavenly Father.

The word bondsman involves the idea of belonging to a master and serving him as a slave. The first Christian idea of a bondsman is that the believer is a purchased possession (I Cor. 6:20; I Pet. 1:18-21). This is illustrated by the slave becoming the property of his creditor (Deut. 15:12). However, the slavery had a termination. But if the slave, because of his love for his master, refused to go free, he remained the servant of his master forever (Deut. 15:16, 17). This illustrates the second Christian idea of a bondsman, which is the believer's self-surrender. Spiritual service must always be the product of choice and never that of coercion. Hence, the believer's surrender is not forced; it is the expression of self-surrender. The new life purchased

by Jesus Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit develops in every recipient of grace the sense of eternal debt to Jesus Christ, a personal debt that can never be forgotten and an infinite debt that can never be fully discharged.

Paul was called an apostle. The adjective “called” (*kletos*, called or summoned) must not be translated like a verb. Since the adjective is without an article, it means a definite call at an indefinite time. Hence, Paul’s call to the apostleship originated in God’s purpose; but God’s purpose became a reality by His sending Jesus Christ to personally purchase Paul and also to summon him to the office (Acts 26:12-18). Paul’s call to apostleship, unlike that of the twelve, followed the days of Christ’s ministry. But he did not consider himself to have fallen short of the superapostles (I Cor. 15:8; II Cor. 11:5).

The apostle Paul had been permanently separated (perfect passive participle of *aphoridzo*, to separate or to set apart) for the gospel of God. The perfect tense denotes that God’s action was completed in past time with continuing results. Paul was not only separated to the message of the gospel itself, along with all who have been regenerated, but he was also separated for its proclamation.

The following are seven things said about the gospel of God in the introduction—Romans 1:1-17.

1. The gospel’s source is God (1:1).
2. The gospel was promised beforehand by the agency of the prophets (1:2).
3. The gospel concerns the Person and Work of Jesus Christ (1:3, 4, 9).
4. The gospel must be preached (1:9, 14, 15). (Also see I Cor. 9:16.)
5. The gospel is the power of God which results in salvation (1:16a).
6. The gospel is to the Jew first and then to the Gentile (1:16b).
7. The gospel is the revelation of God’s righteousness (1:17).

The gospel, by the power of the Spirit of regeneration, forcefully enters the prepared soil of the regenerated heart in a salvation experience (I Thess. 1:5-10). The gospel of God was not hidden in the Old Testament, since it was promised beforehand by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:2; 3:2; Ex. 12; Is. 53; etc.). God’s gospel has many facets, but there has not been and never will be another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). The following are some of the major features of the gospel for consideration:

1. God is the Author of the gospel.
2. Jesus Christ is the subject of the gospel.
3. Grace is the character of the gospel.
4. The elect are the recipients of the gospel.
5. The kingdom will be the consummation of the gospel.

While the gospel means “good news,” Paul emphatically declared that the term does not mean that which is “new” (Rom. 1:2). Some are saying “the gospel of God” is not to be confused with Paul’s gospel—“...the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that has been kept silent in times eternal” (Rom. 16:25—translation). Did Paul preach a different gospel from the gospel that was promised by the prophets? The answer is found in the words of Paul himself in Acts 26:13-23. The “mystery” of Romans 16:25 is not a different gospel from that proclaimed before him, but it was how the Gentiles (non-Jews) could be introduced on the ground of “fellowship” with Old Testament saints (Eph. 2:11-3:12).

The gospel of God is (1) prophesied in the Old Testament, (2) personified in Jesus Christ, and (3) personalized in the saints—God’s elect. God’s gospel of Romans 1:1 was not God’s afterthought but His forethought. In fact, God cannot have an afterthought; in His infinite wisdom, He knows everything simultaneously. The “holy scriptures” of Romans 1:2 identify the gospel with the promised Son of Romans 1:3-4. Therefore, the gospel is personified in the Son of God. The promise became a Person, and the Person became the good news. This good news is described in Romans 1:3-4. The following are the major points of the good news:

1. The word “made” (*genomenou*, aorist middle participle of *ginomai*, to be born, or to come) should be compared with “declared” (*horisthentos*, aorist passive participle of *horidzo*, to declare, designate, or determine). The son who was born of the seed of David has been declared the Son of God. Although Jesus Christ was born the unique man, He was unlike the sons of men. Christ’s being the descendant of David proves He is the man approved of God. His being the only begotten Son of the Father proves He is God.
2. The “seed of David” is to be compared with “the Son of God.” The first reveals Jesus Christ as a member of the human race; the second proves He has a nature superior to the human race. Because of His human nature, He can reach the elect; and because of His Divine nature, He can save them. Thus, due to Christ’s hypostatic union, He is our Kinsman Redeemer.
3. “According to the flesh” should be compared with “according to the Spirit.” The first refers to Christ’s incarnation and humiliation; the second applies to His resurrection and exaltation.

In these verses, the three Persons in the Godhead are seen within one context. The simple rule of mathematics that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other may be applied to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being one. The declaration is by the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection is the proof of the declaration.

Paul concluded the validity of his position and apostleship by saying, “through whom we received grace and apostleship for obedience on behalf of His name...” (Rom. 1:5—translation). Grace and apostleship is the proper order, and this order also demonstrates the fact that blessing comes with responsibility “for obedience to the faith.” In the light of the context, the “faith” (*pistis*) is objective genitive, not subjective genitive.

### ***Salutation***

Following his authentication, Paul greeted the subjects of his Epistle in whom the gospel was personalized (Rom. 1:6, 7). “Called of Jesus Christ” denotes the source of their calling (1:6). The genitive case in the Greek is a mark of ownership; therefore, they belonged to Jesus Christ: “and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God” (I Cor. 3:23 NASB). “Called saints” (dative masculine plural of the adjective *hagios*, holy, righteous, or God’s people) refers to position because of imparted righteousness (1:7). God’s “calling” is sovereign, in Christ, according to God’s eternal purpose, irrevocable, personal, by means of the gospel, and no effort must be spared to make it sure.

Regeneration and calling differ; however, they have a vital connection. Regeneration is the work of the sovereign Godhead; God makes a person who is spiritually dead in his trespasses alive with Christ by the Spirit. (See Ephesians 2:5.) The gracious work of the Spirit in regeneration causes the recipient to respond to the gospel call. Calling, therefore, is the Divine summons which appeals to the principle of life already in the individual’s heart that causes his understanding and will to act. While regeneration takes place independent of the understanding and will, calling is made effectual by the understanding and will. Therefore, calling is the bringing forth by the call of the gospel the Divinely given life into light (II Tim. 1:9, 10). Failure to make this distinction is as foolish as a young married woman calling a baby she prenames and hopes to have when she is not even pregnant.

## COMMENDATION, ASPIRATION, AND OBLIGATION - *Romans 1:8-16*

### Commendation

Paul's commendation began with his prayerful thanksgiving for the "faith" of the Roman saints (Rom. 1:8). "Above all else [*proton*, an adverb meaning in the first place or above all else—*men* is a particle which can be used for emphasis or continuation], I am thanking my God through Jesus Christ concerning all of you, because your faith is being proclaimed in all the world" (translation). The position of the word "faith" before the pronoun in the Greek places the emphasis on faith rather than on the person whose faith it is. The Romans were famous, but their God-given faith must be preeminent. How different this is from what we hear today! What about the praise that is given to some "believers" by religionists? The Biblical understanding of Christianity destroys all human accolades.

### Aspiration

The apostle Paul spoke of "my God" (1:8), "who is my witness" (1:9), "my spirit" (1:9), and "my prayers" (1:9). His God was the sovereign God of the universe; his spirit was his renewed spirit; his prayers were his strong desire for the Roman saints who he had never seen. Hence, we see in this God-called man the zeal of the apostle, the mind of the teacher, and the heart of the pastor (Phil. 1:3-7). One must not overlook the order of Paul's God, his spirit, and his prayers. Apart from one's recognition of God's absolute sovereignty and a renewed spirit, he can never pray effectually. There are prerequisites to one's ability to pray. Prayer is vain unless it is within the rules of Scripture. Prayer was not designed to move God to formulate new purposes, but to conform the believer to God's purpose. Since prayer is in and of the Spirit, it is the Spirit making intercession for us, with us, and in us according to God's will (Rom. 8:26, 27; I John 5:14). Prayer always leads to unselfishness, and this was demonstrated in Paul's life (Rom. 1:9, 10; Acts 20:24).

The spirit of all true service is expressed in Romans 1:11-12—"For I long to see you, in order that I may impart to you some spiritual benefit that you may be established, and that is to share in mutual encouragement through the faith in each of us, both yours and mine" (translation). Spiritual gifts are imparted to God's spiritual leaders for the purpose of their imparting spiritual benefits to assembly members (Eph. 4:11-16). The ministry of pastors/teachers is not exactly mutual with saints in general, but it leads to that which is mutual. Paul's longing was the beginning of his purpose to go to Rome, and his love led him to make definite plans to pursue and fulfill that purpose.

The statement, "through the faith in each of us" (*dia tes en allelois pisteos*), needs careful study in the light of its context. Since the noun *pistis* can mean trust or belief, the system of truth that is

believed, or faithfulness which results from faith, we need to translate the verse in the light of what the apostle was emphasizing. Was he talking about his faith in the Roman Christians, or was he speaking of his faithfulness in imparting some spiritual benefit to them? Did they joyfully receive Paul's teaching, and were they strengthened by their faith in Paul or by their faithful reciprocation (*allelon*, a reciprocal noun)?

Paul had commended "the faith" of the saints and expressed his desire to be with them for fellowship; now he spoke of having some "fruit" among them (Rom. 1:13). Once again we see an important order: (1) faith, (2) fellowship, and (3) fruit. Without faithfulness, there is no basis for fellowship. The basic meaning of *koinonia*, the word for fellowship, is close mutual relationship, sharing, or intimacy. The statement that there is only one fellowship in Scripture into which all believers are brought on accepting Christ as Savior is absolute nonsense. The particular kind of fellowship implied in any passage where the word "fellowship" occurs must be interpreted in the light of its context. Philippians gives some interesting examples of various fellowships: (1) fellowship in the gospel (Phil. 1:5), (2) fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1), (3) fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10), and (4) fellowship of giving (Phil. 4:15). Other examples of fellowship are recorded in Scripture: (1) fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (I John 1:3), (2) fellowship with fellow believers (I John 1:3), (3) fellowship with the assembly (Acts 2:42), etc. Faith leads to fellowship; and in turn, it brings strength and encouragement which results in fruit.

Fruit is the Christian's life, not his deeds. We must not confuse fruitbearing with works. Christ's life in us produces fruit through us. A fruit tree does not struggle to bear fruit, but it bears fruit silently for its owner. Fruit speaks of what we are, and it also represents character.

### **Obligation**

Paul understood what his obligation involved, and he approached his responsibility with a thrice repeated "I am": (1) "I am obligated to both Greeks and to Barbarians, to both wise and to foolish" (Rom. 1:14—translation); (2) "So as much as is in me I am ready [*prothumos*, *pro*, before; and *thumos*, intense feeling—ready in mind, prepared, willing] to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome" (1:15—translation); (3) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, since it is the power of God which results in salvation to everyone believing, both to Jew first and to Greek" (1:16—translation). The apostle was effective in these because he was united to the great "I Am," the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Christ, Paul knew nothing (I Cor. 2:2; 4:4; Phil. 3:10); he could do nothing (John 15:5; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 4:13); he was nothing (II Cor. 12:11); and he had nothing (Phil. 3:7-9). What did Paul have that he had not received from God? (I Cor. 4:7). This question must be made personal.

Paul declared his indebtedness to people without respect to degree of culture or intellect. The wisdom of the cultured will not save, and the ignorant are not excused. God shall destroy the wisdom of the wise, and He shall set aside the understanding of the intelligent (I Cor. 1:19). The apostle's obligation grew out of his indebtedness to Jesus Christ. From the day he began his earthly sojourn, his debt increased; until on the road to Damascus, he was enabled by the Spirit of regeneration to see that a Daysman had come between the righteous Judge and the unrighteous Saul and that He had paid his debt of sin (Rom. 8:1, 18-34). Although the forgiven Paul was

clear of the sin debt, he now had a debt of gratitude to Jesus Christ that he could never pay. There is no “statute of limitations” that could ever cancel such a debt of gratitude; therefore, all Paul could do was to give himself wholly to the proclamation of the good news of which he was unashamed.

Paul affirmed his readiness to preach the gospel. The adjective *prothumos* (Rom. 1:15) reveals the heavy breathing of a runner, or of a parent when his child is endangered. This expresses Paul’s passion to preach (I Cor. 9:16). He was ready not only for service but also to suffer (Acts 21:13), and later he was ready to die (II Tim. 4:6). Preparation is a relative word. We may be prepared for some things but not for others. Paul was ready to preach, and the infinitive “to preach” (*euaggelisasthai*) is in the aorist tense, the tense of finality and absoluteness. He had a definite message that was absolute in its realm and final in its revelation. At that time, he could not say he was ready to die; that statement came after much preparation and at the close of his ministry. This is a valuable lesson for all Christians to learn.

The apostle asserted his boldness when he said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel.” The conjunction *gar* is used three times in Romans 1:16-17—“For [*gar*] I am not ashamed of the gospel; since [*gar*] it is the power of God which results in salvation to [*eis*, accusative of result] everyone believing, both to Jew first, and to Greek. For [*gar*] in it a righteousness of God is being revealed out of faith to faith, as it has been written: the just one shall live by faith” (translation). Each time the conjunction is used it confirms the preceding clause. Paul was unashamed of the gospel because it results in salvation to everyone believing. In the gospel, a God-kind of righteousness is being revealed.

The word of God has an emotional effect on every child of God. He cannot remain stoical in the presence of God’s word. Paul’s emotions are revealed in his going from his position as an apostle before the Lord, which would have been impossible without his first being positionally in Christ, to the moving of his heart in his obligation to Christ for what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for him.

Paul was not ashamed of his message, whether he was in religious Jerusalem, philosophical Athens, commercial Ephesus, immoral Corinth, or powerful Rome. No, Paul was not ashamed of his message though it had a Carpenter for its subject, fishermen for its advocates, and commoners for its supporters. The following are persons who are ashamed of the gospel: (1) the worldly wise, because God makes foolish the wisdom of the wise (I Cor. 1:18-21); (2) the great and powerful of the world, because it brings all men to the same level (Jude 3); (3) the rich, because salvation is without money and without price (Is. 55:1, 2); (4) the pleasure lovers, because they fear it will destroy their mirth (II Tim. 3:2-4); and (5) the religionists, because they hate any message that dethrones man (John 6:58-66).

## THE THEME OF ROMANS - *Romans 1:17*

Paul's theme is the righteousness of God which the gospel reveals (Rom. 1:17). An unobstructed view of righteousness is an absolute necessity for every Christian. The righteousness of Romans 1:17 is a God-kind of righteousness which no one can receive except by the Spirit of regeneration. It is a provision that is righteous because it has been brought into being by the righteous character of God. A perfect analogy to this God-kind of righteousness is II Peter 1:4— "...partakers of a God-like nature..." (translation). No one has either the same Divine nature or the same righteous character as God.

Erroneous views of righteousness in Romans 1:17 are taught: (1) One view is that it is God's attribute of justice. However, justice of itself would have sealed our damnation. (2) Another view is that it is God's goodness that He reveals. But this is a departure from Paul's argument. Why did Paul use the word righteousness if that was true?

Paul was unashamed of the gospel because in it a righteousness for the elect is revealed. Justice requires it (Rom. 1:18-3:20). This righteousness is revealed (Rom. 3:21-5:11). It is realized (Rom. 5:12-8:13). This righteousness is reserved (Rom. 8:14-39). It is reflected (Rom. 12-16).

The following are some points concerning the righteousness of God which give a systematic view of this great subject:

1. The inherently righteous God is the source of this revealed righteousness.
2. The inherently righteous Son of God is the Person in the Godhead who, by His righteous life and death as the God-man, provided a righteousness for the elect.
3. The inherently righteous Spirit is the third Person in the Godhead who imparted the provided righteousness in the elect in regeneration, thus making them finitely righteous in Jesus Christ.
4. Righteous men are those who have had the Christ-provided righteousness imparted in them, because it was first imputed to them in their justification before the inherently righteous Father.
5. The righteousness that is imparted in the elect in salvation is not the mere attribute of justice that effects deliverance from sin; but it is something provided by the obedience of One, Jesus Christ.
6. The provided righteousness is revealed in the gospel, and this message is God's power resulting in salvation.



7. The righteousness of God in the gospel is being revealed out of faith resulting in the operation of faith, because the righteous person by means of a God-given faith will exercise the functions of life. The soul is the life of the body; faith is the life of the soul; Christ is the life of faith.
8. Having had God's provided righteousness imputed and imparted, recipients of provided righteousness are continually performing righteousness, because they have been born out of God.
9. Those who are constantly performing righteousness are also constantly hungering and thirsting for righteousness, because their finite righteousness finds satisfaction only in God's infinite righteousness.
10. The righteous in Christ never tire of magnifying the good news of the inherently righteous character of God the Father who provided a finite righteousness, by the life and death of His Son for the unrighteous elect, without marring God's inherently righteous character.

Various erroneous interpretations of "from faith to faith" have been given:

1. From faith to faith means from one act of faith to another.
2. It means from faith that justifies to faith that sanctifies.
3. It means from the faithfulness of Christ, the source of righteousness, to obtaining this righteousness by faith in Christ.
4. It means from first to last by faith.
5. It means from a lower to a higher degree of faith.
6. It means from the faith God has provided to the faith of man as the receiver.
7. It means out of the faith of one heart into the faith of another.
8. The statement "from faith to faith" is designed to express the idea that God's plan of justifying men is revealed in the gospel, which plan is by faith, and the benefits of this plan shall extend to all who believe.
9. Out of faith unto faith denotes a growing faith.
10. It means from the faith of the Old Testament to the faith of the New Testament.
11. It means from the faithfulness of God revealing to the faith of man receiving.

Let us consider another view. To whom is this God-kind of righteousness—the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary—being revealed? Is it not to the one who has been invaded by the gospel? Paul was now giving further explanation of verse 16. The God-kind of righteousness is being revealed to all the powerful gospel has invaded. The gospel is powerful. It invades with

force, giving a true conversion experience: “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you have known what kind of men we were among you for your sake” (I Thess. 1:5—translation). The gospel does not come to men in general to inform them of a better objective state of affairs. It invades the elect who have been regenerated, calling them to a life of faith and obedience. God never starts anything He does not bring to completion (Phil. 1:6).

A calling to a life of faith and obedience comes from the faithfulness of the One who “became [aorist passive indicative of *ginomai*] wisdom to us from God, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (I Cor. 1:30—translation). The verb is an aorist passive, point action past time, of *ginomai*. Therefore, it is the work of Jesus Christ, what God has done for His own. This righteousness is being revealed from the faithfulness of the One who became righteousness to us. It was first imputed before it was imparted. Imputation is a legal term. It was imparted when we were born of God by the Holy Spirit. Imputed and imparted righteousness being revealed (present passive indicative of *apokalupto*) is by the faithfulness of the One who became righteousness to us (Rom. 1:17). It results in our coming to Christ in faith and subsequently living a life of faith. Hence, we go from the initial act of faith in Christ in a true conversion experience, which Paul explained by the gospel invading with power to give the person who has been quickened a true conversion experience, to the individual living the life of faith; he walks by faith and not by sight.

Believers are in Christ three ways: (1) We are in Him representatively (Rom. 5:16-19). We were crucified with Christ before we existed. (2) We are in Him vitally. This pertains to eternal life (John 15:1-7; Col. 1:27). (3) We are in Him consciously. We were in Christ vitally before we were conscious of it. We are in Him consciously by faith which is the fruit of regeneration and conversion. For this reason, we have the assurance of our salvation (II Tim. 1:12; I John 5:1-13).

## **SECTION II**

### **CONDEMNATION**

*Romans 1:18-3:20*

## PRECURSORY

The division of Romans 1:18-3:20 is characterized by sin. “All unrighteousness is sin” (I John 5:17). Sin is lawlessness (I John 3:4). This does not indicate that laws made by men that are not substantiated by Biblical truth must be obeyed. Disobedience to those laws is not sin in the sight of God. Everything which is not out of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). In his use of the word “faith” in this verse, Paul had reference to Biblical principles. In reference to the ability to believe, it designates God-given faith. In connection with Paul’s belief, it signifies Biblical principles. By the law is the full knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20). The full knowledge of sin comes from the word of God, not by laws made by men.

This division of Romans records God’s indictment of man on two accounts: (1) Man forsook the glory of God, thus manifesting the nature of sin. (2) Man has corrupted his ways, which is the inevitable fruit of sin’s nature. The doctrine of sin is the foundation of the Christian message. Since the gospel is God’s power resulting in salvation, we must understand from what we have been delivered. That is why Paul began his doctrinal treatise by showing that the whole world of mankind stands condemned before God. Therefore, this section entitled “Condemnation” is given to prove that man has no righteousness acceptable to the righteous God.

Paul began his proof of depravity by dealing first with the corruption and condemnation of the Gentiles. He went from the Gentiles in Romans 1:18-32 to the guilt and condemnation of the Jews in Romans 2:1-3:8. Finally, in Romans 3:9-20, the apostle showed that the whole world is in a sinful condition and therefore guilty before God. In addition to having no righteousness to stand before God, man is condemned because of his own sin; and he is not only under the wrath of God, but he is also deserving of death. God x-rayed the human heart, and Paul revealed the findings. The entire picture is comprehended in two verses: (1) “For the punishment of God is being revealed from heaven against every kind of ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth in the sphere of unrighteousness” (1:18—translation). (2) “Who knowing completely the judgment of God, that the ones practicing such things are deserving of death, not only are doing them, but are giving approval with the ones practicing them” (1:32—translation).

The reality of sin has many witnesses, but all we know about its origin can be stated in few words. Sin entered the angelic realm through Lucifer and the human race through Adam, the first man. The penetration of sin into the angelic realm was different from that of the human race. The sin of Lucifer was internal dissatisfaction with his subordinate position (Is. 14; Ezek. 28; II Pet. 2:4). There is no reference to external influence on him in the form of temptation. Furthermore, there is no representative feature about sin’s coming into the angelic realm; hence, there was no cooperation by the angels with Lucifer in his sin. Had there been solidarity in the angelic host with Lucifer, all the angels would have fallen with him. Since the chosen angels did not fall with Lucifer, they need no redemption.

Sin entered the human race through Satan's deception (Gen. 3:1-6; Rev. 12:9) and man's disobedience (Rom. 5:12, 19; I Tim. 2:14). The following are distinguishing features of sin's entrance into the angelic realm and into the human race: (1) Unlike the angels, there was representative solidarity of all mankind with Adam. (2) Unlike Lucifer, Adam was externally tempted. (3) Unlike the chosen angels, there is redemption for the chosen from among mankind.

The general attitude of people in these apostate days is that religious leaders should dwell on the attractive virtues of life and leave the monster called sin to wander unnoticed in the absence of its exposure. Sin is what God says it is; therefore, human opinion must bend to the testimony of Scripture. The Greek word for "sin" is *hamartia*, which means to miss the mark. It is the most comprehensive term for moral and mental obliquity. Sin is divergence from either moral or mental rightness of principle or practice. The word *hamartia* is used of sin as (1) a principle of action (Rom. 5:12, 13), (2) a governing principle (Rom. 5:21; 6:12, 14; 7:8), or (3) a sinful act (James 1:15). Hence, *hamartia* is a principle which has power to produce an act or acts of sin.

There are three major demonstrations of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The first is the sin which caused the fall of Lucifer, "You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you" (Ezek. 28:15 NASB). This is the only verse in Scripture that states the exact origin of sin. All the other references only describe its heinousness. Ezekiel said, "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor..." (Ezek. 28:17 NASB). Pride, which led to insubordination, was the form of Lucifer's sin. Lucifer was given a place of leadership, but his position led him to thoughts of independence. The quality of eternity is the fact that there is only one will, the will of God. At the beginning of God's created order, sin began in the highest of His created beings. In addition to the voice of God, there was now a second voice; and it expressed rebellion against the first voice. When Lucifer became unwilling to rule as a subordinate, he became a traitor; when he exalted himself above God, he became Satan (adversary); when he accused God, he became the Devil (accuser).

A kind of successfulness that eliminates any thought about either the providence or grace of God generates the reprehensible sin of pride. An example of the former is the rich farmer of Luke 12:16-21. This parable was given by our Lord in answer to His refusal to arbitrate between two covetous brothers concerning an inheritance. Covetousness is an inordinate desire for gain with roots in the depraved nature. Its philosophy is, "what you have is mine if I can get it." Furthermore, one who demands his dues may be as covetous as the one withholding them. Christ, knowing both were at fault, refused to take sides for the reason that He had a higher mission than the social-liberal concept of religion. In the final analysis, according to the parable Christ spoke, the person who says I will build greater barns, I will store all my fruits and goods, and I will say to my soul, eat, drink, and be merry is a fool. The farmer was a fool because he was not rich toward God; and in all his success as a farmer, he eliminated the God of providence who gives the climate to produce crops. So far as the farmer was concerned, his will alone had produced his wealth. Two wills shall continue in the sphere of mankind until time shall be no more.

Paul gave a warning concerning pride in the realm of grace. In giving qualifications for the bishop—one who has oversight in a local assembly—he said, "Not a new convert, in order that

not having been puffed up he may fall into the judgment of the Devil” (I Tim. 3:6—translation). Apart from study and experience, one can easily become conceited with his position. In I Timothy 3:6, the passive voice of the verb *tuphoo* proves Satan uses the lack of knowledge and experience as his target; and through that hole in one’s armor, he causes pride to manifest itself. Another good example of this pride is found in the seventy who returned from their mission and related their success (Luke 10:17-20). They were taken up with their accomplishments rather than rejoicing in the One who had enabled them. While the seventy disciples were away, Christ saw in prophetic anticipation the completion of both His work and the work to which He commissioned His disciples: “And He said to them: I was observing Satan who has fallen [aorist active participle of *pipto*, to fall to one’s ruin or destruction] from heaven as lightning” (Luke 10:18—translation). Unless we can look on what success we may experience from a heart that is above it, we are sure to be lifted with pride. Christ gave the reason for rejoicing when He said to the seventy, “...you rejoice that your names have been permanently recorded [perfect passive indicative of *eggrapho*, to write or record] in the heavens” (Luke 10:20—translation). The chief joy of Christians must be that our names are recorded in the heavens, seeing that “our citizenship is in the heavens; from where we also are waiting expectantly for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20—translation).

The second major demonstration of the exceeding sinfulness of sin was when Adam fell. Sin came not from creation but from the fall. Although God is not the author of sin, one cannot deny that sin is included in His eternal purpose. The order in God’s eternal purpose is as follows: (1) God decreed to manifest His glory. (2) God decreed to create mankind. (3) God decreed to permit the fall. (4) God decreed to elect some from among the fallen. (5) God decreed to provide redemption for the elect. (6) God decreed to apply redemption to the elect. (7) God decreed the perseverance of the elect through their preservation by Him. (8) God decreed the glorification of the elect and the destruction of the nonelect. Therefore, God’s purpose to order things so that sin should come to pass for the sake of His decree is not an argument against God’s hating sin as sin. Sin had no actual existence before it was committed by the creatures God created without sin—Lucifer, the angelic being, and Adam, the first man who was also the representative man. Sin became a reality only when Lucifer and Adam rebelled against the will of God. That which comes from God’s creatures is a secondary consideration; therefore, sin is a secondary rather than a primary consideration.

The question is often asked, why did God create man capable of falling? Since God cannot create God, whatever God creates is by nature inferior to the Creator. Therefore, the image of God in which man was created does not imply a perfect representation of God (Gen. 1:27). Jesus Christ alone is the very image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Since holiness is God’s chief attribute, uprightness must of necessity be the chief attribute of man. Adam was a being created in uprightness (Eccl. 7:29), but his uprightness was unconfirmed. Man’s original state consisted of personality and uprightness. Personality distinguishes man from the animals. It is the ability to know self as related to God and the world and to make decisions concerning moral issues. Adam’s uprightness was mutable. He could not be unchangeably upright, because immutability is proper to God alone and cannot be attributed to any of His creatures. Since Adam’s uprightness was created, it was finite and therefore capable of sinning. It had to be finite because God who is infinite cannot create infinity.

Adam's sin included the whole human race (Rom. 5:12-19). This greatly disturbs the natural mind, because it cannot understand how people subsequent to Adam can be guilty of his sin which was committed 6,000 years ago. Before one gets too "worked up" over the representative nature of Adam's sin, he must stop and consider the representative nature of Christ's redemption. However, one must be able to recognize the difference between the participation of all mankind in Adam's sin and the inclusion of only the elect in Christ's redemption. In redemption, there is no race unity, but there was in Adam. Depravity includes the entire human race; redemption includes the chosen ones from within the human race. All men fell in Adam, but some men are redeemed by Christ. Union in Adam is universal, but union in Christ is particular because it is by election (Eph. 1:4), redemption (Mark 10:45), and regeneration (John 3:8) based on the eternal covenant of grace (Heb. 13:20, 21; John 17).

The third major demonstration of sin's exceeding sinfulness is Calvary. Having seen that sin involves every human being who has entered and shall enter the stream of time, we must consider not only its beginning and development, but also its judgement on behalf of the elect. The death of Jesus Christ supposes an offending man and the offended God. Furthermore, it implies that the Offended holds the offender justly bound to suffer penal consequences that are merited by the offense. These facts before us made the death of Jesus Christ an absolute necessity in order for God to forgive the offenders. He chose some out from among depraved mankind. These chosen offenders in themselves cannot satisfy Divine justice.

Transgression against God is a capital offense punishable by death. People who oppose capital punishment for a capital crime also take issue with God's capital punishment on sinners who die in their sins. Justice demands punishment proportionate to the crime. Hence, transgression against God demands no less than death; and since sin against God is a boundless crime, it demands everlasting punishment. To order punishment greater than the crime is an unrestrained exercise of power, and to order punishment less than the crime is a weakness of authority. Worst of all, unrighteousness is revealed in both. The vileness of the sinner is reflected in the elevated rank of the sovereign God he has offended; therefore, sin against God is everlasting.

Persons who believe Christ died for all mankind get themselves in an embarrassing doctrinal situation. As God was not obligated to prevent the fall, He was not bound by necessity to redeem man after the fall. In order to redeem man, Christ must die, but not by an antecedent necessity. Salvation of lost mankind was not an absolute necessity in itself; but because God sovereignly chose some from among lost mankind to be saved according to His good pleasure, He was under the necessity to accomplish this deliverance from depravity through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is why Christ said, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to be believing in all the things which the prophets spoke: Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26—translation). As the Father was not compelled to redeem man after the fall, Christ was under no obligation to die except to redeem those included in the covenant of grace which was made by the Godhead (Heb. 13:20, 21).

Jesus Christ alone as the incarnate Savior could satisfy Divine justice. The sinner is incapable of effecting Divine satisfaction for the following reasons: (1) Sons of disobedience cannot be obedient, since they do not possess grace. (2) Human suffering cannot make satisfaction because it is finite. (3) Human suffering is as incapable as the Old Testament sacrifices of Divine

satisfaction. However, Divine justice was satisfied through the death of Jesus Christ for the following reasons: (1) There is such elevation of character in the righteous Godhead—“...Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is. 6:3)—that all that is done is infinite in its merit. (2) When the Father condescended to give His Son for the elect, the Son condescended to suffer for the elect for the purpose of paying their debt of sin; and the Holy Spirit condescended to regenerate the elect and dwell in them. (3) Justice itself prevents mercy from operating; but when justice is satisfied, the requirement of more would cause it to become injustice.

A reply to those who say the price of redemption is for the whole human family, since they claim it was a necessity for Christ to die for all, is that they must admit that it is also necessary for Him to regenerate all for whom He died. But their claim is contrary to Scripture.



## **CORRUPTION AND CONDEMNATION OF THE GENTILES - *Romans 1:18-32***

Romans 1:18-32 teaches that the punishment by God is being revealed against those who deny God's character and His righteous standard. Sin falls into two divisions: (1) ungodliness (*asebeia*, godlessness or impiety), and (2) unrighteousness (*adikia*, unrighteousness or injustice). Ungodliness refers to the want of reverence toward the sovereign God; unrighteousness applies to the absence of morality. "For the punishment [*orge*, wrath or punishment] of God is being revealed [present passive indicative of *apokalupto*, to reveal, uncover, or disclose] from heaven against [*epi*, dative of disadvantage] every kind of ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing [present active participle of *katecho*, to restrain or suppress] the truth in the sphere of unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18—translation). The order is significant, since it goes from impiety to immorality. Thus, both the first and second laws are broken by men. When men disregard God, they have no regard for mankind.

The following are persons against whom God's punishment is being revealed: (1) It is being revealed against the rejecters of general revelation (Rom. 1:18-21). (2) God's punishment is being disclosed against those who exchange God's incorruptible glory for a likeness of God's creatures (vv. 22, 23). (3) It is being manifested against those who degrade their bodies to satisfy their hearts' evil passions, and they are given over to their unrestrained desires as their punishment (vv. 24-27). (4) God is manifesting His wrath against those who do not think it worthwhile to have a true knowledge of God. They are given over to a worthless mind as their punishment; and their corrupted, unrestrained minds are filled with all unrighteousness described by a list of horrible sins (vv. 28-31). (5) He is revealing wrath against sinners because they have known completely the punishment by God that the ones practicing such things are deserving of death (v. 32).

### **Rejecters Of General Revelation Punished**

God's punishment is being revealed against the rejecters of general revelation (Rom. 1:18-21). General revelation is a creational revelation in which God is objectively knowable. However, that does not mean that the natural man is capable of receiving this revelation and developing a natural theology by which man can know God in a redemptive sense. Being able to know God apart from revelation in Christ is possible, because creation in itself is a revelation of God's existence. Hence, there is a revelation of God which precedes the revelation of God in Christ; but faith in the Creator through general revelation is not the same as God-given faith in the Redeemer through the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit through the gospel.

There is no competition between God's general and special revelations, because the first is God's work in creation, and the second is the work of redemption in His only begotten Son. The major difference in these two revelations is the distinction between the universality of creation's revelation and the particularity of redemption's revelation. Furthermore, every human being stands inexcusable before the Creator on the basis of reason. But only the elect of God stand before Him on the basis of the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ made sure by Christ's substitutionary death. This knowledge, unlike knowledge from creation, concerns grace and truth which exceeds the capacity of human reason.

The insufficiency of natural revelation for supernatural understanding of the sovereign God can be understood by considering Adam before his fall. If reason based merely on natural revelation was sufficient for Adam's rule of life, why did he need further instruction from God pertinent to what he should and should not do? (See Gen. 1:29-31; 2:16, 17.) Since our parents, whose reason was more complete before the fall, needed further instruction, we, whose reason is based on general revelation subsequent to the fall, must have special revelation in order to understand God's will for our lives on earth.

General revelation is both subjective and objective: "Because that which is known [*gnoston*, an adjective used as a pronoun which is understood by its being in the nominative case—subject of description—of *gnostos*, which can be either known or capable of being known] of God is evident in them; for God manifested [*ephanerosen*, aorist active infinitive of *phaneroo*, manifest or bring to light] it to them" (Rom. 1:19—translation). There are two views of this knowledge. Some say the context would indicate that God's knowledge is knowable because of what God has made visible among them, thus making the preposition *en* mean the locative of location—"in them." The evidence of the immediate context of verses 18-21 and the overall context of verses 18-32 proves the idea of the subjective, "in them," rather than the location, "among them." If the latter were true, the translation would have to read, "Because that which is knowable of God is possible among them." However, verses 18-20, the immediate context, and verse 32—"Who knowing completely the requirement of God"—prove beyond a shadow of doubt that "Because that which is known of God is evident in them" is the correct translation.

Man through general revelation is given a subjective knowledge concerning God which renders him inexcusable: "For the invisible things of Him since [*apo*, dative of time, when something begins, since] the creation of the world are being clearly seen [*kathoratai*, present passive indicative of *kathorao*, to see thoroughly or to perceive clearly], being understood [*nooumena*, present passive participle of *noeo*, understand or gain an insight into] by the things made, both His eternal power and deity, with the result [*eis*, accusative of result] that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20—translation). The effect on man is not that he is left without sin, but he is without excuse pertaining to his primitive knowledge of God. Hence, man's history proves his deterioration, not his advancement. He has regressed from a higher to a lower elevation. The present world of mankind began with the knowledge of God, in that the whole world population stood around Noah's altar after the flood (Gen. 8:20).

General revelation is limited in purpose. The right of revelation must be considered. Since God has all power and wisdom, He has the right to reveal or hide Himself according to His will. God is known in His power and deity by the things which are made, but He has the right to hide His

mercy and grace and reveal them to the elect in special revelation. (See Matt. 11:25-27.) The law of manifestation presupposes a hidden power capable of producing the manifestation. If men question the invisible Person behind the visible creation, they are only pretending blindness to God's power and deity (Rom. 1:32). The purpose of general revelation is to render every human being without excuse concerning the existence of God.

General revelation is sufficient to accomplish the following things: (1) Nature reveals the fact of God. (2) The invisible God is the Creator and Governor of the visible world. (3) God must be glorified by man. (4) By reason of His eternal power and deity, God demands homage and gratitude. (5) By right of authority, God commands all men to repent. (6) God is obligated on account of His righteousness and justice to punish every unrighteous deed.

General revelation is manifested to the mind of man. Nature proclaims the existence of God, but nature is altogether silent concerning what God is to man. Man is responsible to bow before nature's revelation and desire God's further disclosure. This was Paul's message in his address before the philosophers of Athens (Acts 17:16-31). Paul commenced where the philosophers concluded, with "AN UNKNOWN GOD." He started with the philosophers' belief in immanence—that which takes place in the mind without any external effect. He then directed their thinking to the transcendent God, the Creator who is able and independent of His creation (Acts 17:24-27). About this transcendent God, Paul said, "To seek God, if perhaps they might grope for [*pselapheseian*, aorist active optative of *pselaphao*—the possible but doubtful mood—which means to touch, feel, or grope for as in the dark or search blindly] Him and find Him, though being not far [omnipresent] from each one of us" (Acts 17:27—translation). The apostle closed his message by showing the overwhelming transcendence of God in His commanding all men to repent, because God has set a day in which He is destined to be judging the inhabited earth in righteousness by a Man He appointed, giving a guarantee to all, having raised Him from the dead (Acts 17:30, 31). Since human responsibility is the cause of guilt, and punishment is the consequence of it, God's justice demands judgment.

### **The Existence Of God Revealed**

The reason the universe is what it is can be understood by the Christian. It has been created by the triune God. Anyone who reads, studies, and believes Romans 1:18-32 cannot believe there is a person who, even though he denies it, does not believe in the existence of God. Hence, there is no genuine atheist. This has been proved by people who would debate the subject. In their statements, they deny what they claim to believe. According to Romans 1:32, every person coming into this world believes God exists and that His judgment is just: "Who knowing completely the requirement of God, that the ones practicing such things [the things described in vv. 18-32] are deserving of death, not only are doing them, but are giving approval to the ones practicing them" (v. 32—translation).

### **Subjective And Objective Knowledge**

Subjective and objective knowledge are taught in Romans 1:18-20—"For the punishment of God is being revealed from heaven against every kind of ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth in the sphere of unrighteousness, because that which is known of

God is evident in them, for God manifested it to them. For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are being clearly seen being understood by the things made, both His eternal power and deity, with the result that they are without excuse” (translation).

Concerning God’s existence, it has been said that God is more truly thought than He is described and exists more truly than He is thought. The subjective idea of God is less real than the objective fact that God exists. This means God has more of existence than the thought of Him has. An unregenerate person thinks about God, but his thinking about God cannot compare with the objective revelation of God in creation, because his thinking is limited. The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are evident. Since they are evident in every person, every individual is inexcusable before God (v. 20).

One whose intellect is enlightened by the Spirit of God will be receptive to the truth of God’s existence, and his emotions will be affected. Since the only necessity known to logic is the negative law of contradictions, the definition of “necessary being” in the logical sense of the term is a being the denial of whose existence would be a self-contradiction. The existence of God cannot be based on abstract laws of logic. Abstract logic cannot establish the existence of any substantive entity. The person who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). God is righteous; God is holy; God is love; God is just; God is omnipotent; God is omniscient; etc. God’s existence is necessary. In ordinary speech, necessary means necessary for something. (1) God’s existence is necessary for our being here. We would not be here if God had not chosen, planned, decreed, and purposed that we be here. (2) God’s existence is necessary for our salvation. (3) God’s existence is necessary for our understanding. (4) God’s existence is necessary for our sustenance: “For in him we live, and move, and have our being...” (Acts 17:28). We are created by God, saved by God, sustained by God, have understanding as a result of His gift, persevere as Christians because God preserves us, and have hope in the future because God shall glorify us. Whatever God begins, He brings to a successful conclusion.

The fact of God’s existence is not causally grounded on the abstract laws of logic, and it is not causally determined by any other fact. Our finite minds are not geared to conceive of an uncaused eternal Being. We apprehend Him because we are the children of God, and we lay hold of this understanding and make it ours because of grace within us. The soul of man answers to the objective reality of God. The things that are made fully manifest to the mind of man show that a cause brought those things into existence. Anything pertaining to God is infinite. We have finite minds, but He enables us to understand to an extent. The order in the world and in man reflects God’s existence. God is methodical. He does nothing haphazardly or without purpose. Some question, If the world was brought into existence by God, where did God come from? Existence itself does not demand a cause. The coming into existence of the nonexistent demands a cause, but God’s existence is eternal.

The principle by which an endless series of causes is avoided is in the difference between the Creator and the created. That principle may be arranged by formulating the objective, and then the subjective is better understood. God is so inaccessible that we cannot perfectly know Him. However, God is so greatly manifested by the things He has created that man is without excuse. God’s essence cannot be comprehended, but His existence cannot be denied. The heathen,

wherever they are, understand that there is a supreme Being. This may be explained by the shining sun. Before the sun rises, the beauty of creation cannot be seen; but in the light of the sun these things are visible. While the sun reveals these things, it is also revealing itself. Darkness in one's home is eliminated when a light is turned on. The light reveals the things in the room. At the same time, it also reveals itself. The sovereign God of the universe could not do other than create, because He lives. The first component in God's decree was to manifest His glory, and that He has done and is doing. The Psalmist portrayed this by calling attention to general and special revelations and the result of both in Psalm 19. General revelation is referred to in verses 1-6—"THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." Special revelation is taught in verses 7-11—"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." The result of general and special revelation is expressed in verses 12-14—"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." No child of God can face the word of God without relating with the Psalmist.

God makes Himself known to all in general revelation, and He makes Himself known to His people in special revelation. As every effect must have a cause, revelation always implies a Revealer. Since God is the Revealer, invisible things are made evident. Neither the world nor any creature could make itself or himself. If man made himself, he would be the cause before he could be the effect. This may be applied in two areas: (1) Approaching the Lord is the effect of having been chosen; the cause is God's choice: "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts..." (Ps. 65:4). Coming to Christ is the effect; the cause is The Father's giving: "All that the Father gives to me shall come to me, and the one coming to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37—translation). There is first an eternal gift of all that God chose, and then there is a continual giving. (2) If the first man had made himself, he would not have limited himself. If he had given himself being, why did he not give himself perfection of being? (3) If the first man had made himself, he could have preserved himself; preservation is not more difficult than creation. (4) If the first man had made himself, he would have been able to support himself; but no one supports himself. The need of others is a fact of life.

God cannot be found out by our senses. We cannot see gravitation steady the mountains or the principle of life in a seed planted in the ground. We see only the mountains in their places and the plant that springs from the seed. God cannot be found by physical analysis. Love is required

to find love. The pure in heart shall see God. Love cannot be found by the use of a microscope; neither can we sweep up music with a broom. Men cannot find God when they use the wrong instruments. By faith we understand that the ages were framed by the word of God. Grounds for belief in God's existence are "clearly seen, being understood by the things made, both His eternal power and deity, with the result that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20—translation). There is universal belief in the existence of God, and it has the force of a natural law. The moral nature of man attests the existence of God. Therefore, man is conscious of responsibility.

A frequently repeated question is, can the existence of God be proved by argument? Many philosophers deny that His existence can be proved by argument. Liberals among religionists see no need to prove God's existence. They believe it is assumed throughout the system. According to this system, the assumption is that no man can prove the existence of God; thus, no man can say that God is. Their opinion is that when we try to prove God exists, we are guilty of making God the object. They assert that when He says He exists, God is the subject and not the object; and God is wholly the subject and not the object. Contrary to the religious liberals, Paul stated that there is a subjective knowledge of God in every man (Rom. 1:19). Since the subjective knowledge of God's existence is an objective fact, it must be revealed and established by evidence.

Men do not have the knowledge of God's holiness, justice, mercy, and love by intuition. They have knowledge of only His power, ability to create, and His wisdom in creation. This is all that is revealed in general revelation. His grace, love, and mercy cannot be known without special revelation. These attributes are revealed only by the Spirit of God in regeneration through the Scriptures He has committed to us. Objection to the atmosphere that sustains man illustrates that one assumes that God exists while arguing that He does not. As a person acknowledges his own existence by doubting it, he admits the existence of God by questioning it.

A rationalist may be defined as one who substitutes human reason for Divine revelation. Hence, to be classified as a rationalist, one must have received and rejected some revelation from God. Such men are described in Romans 1:18-32. Paul was talking about the heathen, not Christians. "Therefore, having known God they did not glorify or give thanks to Him as God, but they became vain in their reasonings, and the undiscerning heart of them was darkened. Asserting themselves to be wise they were made foolish, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for a likeness of corruptible man and of birds and of four-footed beasts and of creeping things; for this reason God gave them over because of the lusts of their hearts" (Rom. 1:21-24a—translation). "And since they did not think it worthwhile to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a worthless mind..." (v. 28—translation). Many today in the field of academic training have been given over to worthless minds.

Consider four arguments with their basic meanings. Each comes from a Greek word. (1) The cosmological argument—The word cosmological comes from *kosmos*, which means world or order of arrangement. The basic principle of this argument is that every effect must have a cause. (2) The teleological argument—The word teleological comes from *telos*, which means end or design. Its basic meaning is that the eternal being is intelligent. This argument more properly concerns the relation of the intelligent Being to the world than to His existence. (3) The anthropological argument—Anthropological comes from the word *anthropos*, the word for man.

Its basic principle is that man's mind cannot evolve from matter nor his spirit from flesh. He is an intelligent creature who can think and reason. (4) The ontological argument—This is an argument for the existence of God. It is based on the Greek participle of the verb *eimi*, to be or exist—being or existing—*on*, present active participle nominative masculine singular of *eimi* (Heb. 11:6). Its basic principle denotes that God is the absolute Being in distinction from an imperfect being.

### **God Revealed In Creation**

God is made known in His creation. Religionists are enraged when someone says that God has revealed Himself in Christ and no one can come to God the Father except through Christ by the Spirit. They assert that intolerance and bigotry are greater curses to mankind than ignorance and error. Religionists—none of whom can tell who God is—make up a great portion of religious denominations, nondenominationalists, and fraternal organizations, such as Freemasonry, Odd Fellows, etc. Scripture teaches that no one can believe “God is,” in the sense of Hebrews 11:6, without bringing his own personal comprehension of the Divine Trinity into harmony with the delineations of Holy Scripture. (See John 5:23; Eph. 2:18; I Pet. 1:21; I John 2:23.)

There is no contradiction between “having known God” of Romans 1:21 and “the ones who have not known God [perfect active participle of *oida*, which means they are in a present state of not knowing God]” (translation) of II Thessalonians 1:8. Romans 1:19-21 does not sacrifice anything of the radical antithesis between knowing and not knowing taught throughout Scripture. The knowledge of the heathen in Romans 1 is not contradictory to the ignorance of the heathen about whom Paul spoke in other Epistles. There is no halfway stop between the darkness of depravity and the light of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. One can go from the first to the second only by the way of regeneration. Romans 1 points to an inescapable confrontation with the revelation of God in creation, and II Thessalonians 1 shows that Christ's punishment will come on those who are rejecters of the special revelation of God in Christ. Only by distinguishing between general and special revelations can one do justice to the message of Scripture.

Scripture teaches both general and particular revelations. There is no competition between God's general revelation in creation and His particular revelation in Jesus Christ. There is a natural knowledge of God apart from the God-given revelation of Himself in His Son. The natural light of reason receives this knowledge apart from the special revelation in Scripture. There are two kinds of knowledge: (1) Many things can be known by natural reason in the realms of the universe and man. People can even have a natural knowledge of spiritual things. However, reason in itself is not sufficient to be man's guide. Since Adam before the fall needed special directions from God, how much more does man in a state of depravity after the fall. (2) Some things can be known only by faith, and those things are in the realm of the supernatural. Knowing things by faith is by God-given, not natural, faith. Subjective faith can be either natural or God-given; therefore, faith must be identified. Most people have made a god out of their human faith. Only subjective faith, which is the fruit of regeneration, is the channel through which objective faith (truth of the gospel) flows with a salvation experience. (See Heb. 11:3; John 6:69.)

Paul showed that a subjective knowledge of God through general revelation alone will not bring a person to know God in Jesus Christ, but it does make everyone inexcusable before God. Furthermore, since this subjective knowledge is an objective fact in general revelation, the objective fact is established by evidence. There will be a twofold effect on those who hear the established evidence of the revelation of God in His creation. Although the unregenerate will be exposed to a greater witness of God's existence, it will not be the means of their conversion because they do not possess the gift of life, which enables people to understand spiritual things. This is not to say they cannot have a human understanding of some spiritual truths. On the other hand, the regenerate, with limited spiritual understanding of the Divine Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—will have a clearer understanding of general revelation.

The Christian approach to the subject “God and His creation” must begin the way Scripture begins: “IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1 NASB). “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion....So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:26, 27). The Hebrew word for God is *Elohim*. Its plural ending when used of God is described as a plural of majesty rather than a true plural. The plural *Elohim* is consistently used with singular verbs, adjectives, and nouns. Both the unity of one God and the plurality of Persons are displayed in verse 26. Going from “God” to “us” and “our” proves the plurality of Persons in the Godhead. This can be illustrated by verse 27—“So God created man in his own image....” Notice that God goes from “our” in verse 26 to “his” in verse 27. Further testimony to the plurality in unity is seen in God's creation: “...in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (v. 27). Here, God goes from the singular pronoun “him” (Adam) to the plural pronoun “them” (Adam and Eve). The name LORD (Jehovah, *yahweh*) God is used in Genesis 2 beginning with verse 4. This became the national name used by the Jewish people. He is their God by covenant. God's name identifies His nature.

The Divine Trinity does not assert that there are three Persons united in one Person, or that three Gods are united in one God. Furthermore, the Trinity does not affirm that God merely manifests Himself in three different ways. It cannot be said that the first manifestation sent the second manifestation into the world to die for those chosen by the first manifestation. Neither can it be said that the third manifestation regenerates all of those chosen by the first manifestation and redeemed by the second manifestation. Christians do maintain that another way of saying “God” is that there are three distinct Persons in the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute the one true and living God, and yet each Person is God. Each has a distinguishing quality of His own, but one Person is not God separate from the others. This means that each Person with the other two is God, but each of the Persons in the Godhead cannot be either of the others. If this were not true, there could be no distinctions.

The terms Father, Son, and Spirit do not express different relations of God to His creatures. They are not analogous to the terms Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. The Son is of the Father, but the Father is never of the Son. The Spirit is of the Father and of the Son. The Father sent the Son, and the Father and the Son sent the Spirit. The Father operates through the Son, and the Father and the Son operate through the Spirit. Although there are some things attributed to all three Persons, certain acts are predicated to one Person which are never predicated to the other two Persons. In the light of these Biblical facts, anyone who denies the Divine Trinity is not a



Christian. All three Persons are eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. They are together in creation, incarnation, salvation of the elect, and access of the elect to God, as well as in giving strength, comfort in life, and perfection in glory.

As there is order in the Godhead, there is order in God's creation. Both the cosmos and man demand a cause and explanation. There is a common method used in research that must not be ignored by either theologians or scientists: (1) One must gather and correlate facts, but prejudiced people form their opinions without going to the trouble and time involved in gathering facts. To them prejudice is a great time-saver. (2) One must seek an explanation of the facts that have been correlated, but the lazy who are filled with prejudices or customs need no explanation because they have already formed an opinion. (3) The Christian has advantage over the non-Christian in his searching for an explanation of the facts. While the nonbeliever is seeking to find a hypothesis which seems to fit and explain the data which he has been able to gather and correlate from general revelation, the Christian begins with the Creator who has also given a special revelation in Scripture.

The child of God knows the cosmos and man are what they are because they were created by the Divine Trinity. Since the universe is vast beyond man's comprehension, the believer knows that the cause must be greater than the effect. Knowing that planet earth was populated with creatures for sea, air, and land after their kind before God created man to have dominion over them, the Christian understands that God is the only One who can answer the puzzling questions concerning the cosmos and man. Hence, the more one knows about the nature, character, and order of God, the easier those puzzling questions are answered. But God's nature, character, and order can never be learned apart from His special revelation, the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, Christians go by grace from general to special revelation for answers which can never be found in general revelation.

Those who rely on God's special revelation recognize that both "revelation" and "mystery" exist concerning God and His creation. "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29 NASB). The fact that man has always quarrelled with God over secret things can be traced back to the one prohibition in the garden of Eden. Man associates secrecy with selfishness, but all nature proves that in Divine administration secrecy and revelation co-exist. For example, God keeps to Himself the secret of germination, but He gives the revelation in the harvest. God does not reveal the life principle, but the fact of life is manifested in the plant, the creature, and man.

Ignorance of many things does not indicate that man can be sure of none. Man may be able to have a working knowledge of a particular subject without knowing much about it. For example, one may avail himself of the power of electricity without knowing anything about electrochemistry. Furthermore, a person can be a Christian without being able to give a discourse on theology, anthropology, and soteriology. The man born blind could not answer all the interrogations by the Pharisees, but he could say, "...one thing I have known [perfect active indicative of *eido*, completed action in past time with a resulting state of knowing], that being blind now I am seeing [present active indicative of *blepo*, which means to see]" (John 9:25—translation). Although the healed man was ignorant of many things, he possessed permanent

knowledge of his being able to see. Even in his state of being a novice, the healed man knew more than the Jewish doctors of law who interrogated him. He gave an unanswerable argument which completely silenced his interrogators: “The man answered and said to them: Indeed in this is a wonderful thing, that you have not known [perfect active indicative of *oída*, which means you—second person plural—not only did not know but you are in a state of not knowing] where He [Jesus Christ] is from, and He opened my eyes” (John 9:30—translation). Following this, the healed man was driven out of the synagogue because of his faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Christ was also driven outside by His own people (Heb. 13:12, 13); and worse than that, Jesus Christ is outside of the Laodicean assemblies today (Rev. 3:20). The healed man worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ after he was driven out (John 9:30).

Ignorance is never justifiable in any realm of endeavor. A person working with electricity is obligated to know something about it. Furthermore, a new Christian is warned by Scripture not to be ignorant concerning that which may be a mystery to him. (See Rom. 1:13; 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; I Thess. 4:13.) When one ponders any problem, he can ask questions for which he may not have a reply. A wise person in this situation will express a humility of mind rather than the stubborn pride of human reason that is without foundation. There is a boldness of speculation which will acknowledge no mystery, but no honest man of theology or any other science will profess to have universal acquaintance with either the universe or man. No one should ever be ambitious of that knowledge which the condition of his nature makes impossible for him to obtain. Finite man is limited in his pursuit; therefore, true wisdom must be content with the knowledge which God has been pleased to reveal of Himself and His creation. However, everything now unknown should not be considered as belonging to the secret things of God, and thus unfathomable by either the man of God or the man of science. This would destroy the Biblical teaching that the man of God should grow in knowledge (II Pet. 3:18), and it would cause the man of science to be indifferent to research.

Knowledge, but not a perfect knowledge, of God is necessary, because He is incomprehensible pertaining to His perfection, purpose, works, and providence. Searching after God is a righteous, useful, and endless occupation: “...Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (Job 11:7b). “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant” (Ps. 25:14). The secret of the Lord refers to that which cannot be known unless He sees fit to reveal it. This secret involves the secret of the new birth; therefore, when the heart has been sanctified (set apart) by grace, the mind is enlightened. Three great truths are given in Psalm 25:14—(1) The origin of fear is God. This fear is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7). God puts this fear in the heart so that the recipient shall not depart from Him (Jer. 32:40). (2) A secret has been communicated in every heart where reverential fear has been placed by God. (3) The promise is that God will show His people the eternal covenant of grace (Heb. 13:20, 21). The knowledge will not be merely intellectual but also experiential. Like Daniel, the recipient will seek to make Divine wisdom known to others (Dan. 2:16, 17).

During the time one is exploring some of the trinities of the cosmos and man, he must never lose sight that apart from the Divine Trinity, the Creator of the cosmos and man, he can never have a true perspective of either. The existence of both is the result of God’s creative work. How could the innumerable particles of matter in space rendezvous themselves into a cosmos? Since the cosmos is a reality, it is not coming into existence. How could each creature created “after his

kind” evolve into something of a different kind? God did not begin a process without first bringing creatures into existence, each after its kind. Whatever He commanded came by that command to be after “his kind.” The theory of evolution is that of transmutation (a change from one kind to another kind), a constant becoming something different from what it was, thus a change from one species to a different species. Does this mean that man is the product of the amoeba, the one-celled animal that through the process of puckeration (agitation) twisted itself to become two cells? If that were the case, it would be logical to say that the original dodad by its own process of puckeration puckered itself to become two dodads. Ever since then each dodad is wondering which is the dad to the other dodad. That makes as much sense as evolution. Scripture teaches existence and mutation (change within the species). It has been said that dinosaurs are the direct lineal progenitors of fowls. That would mean a ninety foot, eight ton reptile slowly evolved into a ten pound chicken. Is this going from the simple to the complex?

The trinity of God is revealed by the universe and man. God is a trinity, and the universe is full of trinities. Man himself is a triune being. Everything we see is made by God and reflects His Being. In God’s decree, the aspect of natural law is necessary to hold His physical creation together: “Because all things were created by Him in the heavens and on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things have been created [perfect passive indicative of *ktidzo*] by Him and for Him; and He is before all things and in Him all things have held together [perfect active indicative of *sunistemi*]” (Col. 1:16, 17—translation). Hence, a person can learn even from natural revelation, whether or not he knows anything about the Scriptures, that all things are being held together in their places by the sovereign God.

God exists in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is represented as the source. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son. The Holy Spirit is seen in Christ’s promise to the disciples that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in Christ’s name, and Jesus Christ would send the Holy Spirit from the Father (John 14:26; 16:7). The characteristics of the Son and the Spirit differ in their work: (1) All outgoing seems to be the work of Christ. All return to God seems to be the work of the Holy Spirit. (2) Christ is the organ of external revelation. The Holy Spirit is the organ of internal revelation. (3) Christ is our Intercessor at the present time in heaven. The Holy Spirit is presently the Intercessor within us. (4) In the work of Christ, the sinner is passive. In the work of the Spirit in the sinner, the sinner is active because he has been made alive.

The Father is represented as the source. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son. The Holy Spirit is seen in Christ’s promise to the disciples that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in Christ’s name, and Jesus Christ would send the Holy Spirit from the Father (John 14:26; 16:7).

In the unique Trinity, the Father is Deity invisible. He reveals Himself in the Son (John 1:18). The Son has declared the Father. Deity cannot be manifested without the Father’s being manifested because the Father is Divine. Christ is the express image of the Father (Heb. 1:3). Hence, Jesus Christ could say, “...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...” (John 14:9), because in Him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). The Son assumed a human

nature, died, rose from the dead, and works among men through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, like the Father, is invisible. He reveals the Father in the Son; therefore, He works unseen.

There is order in this Divine Trinity. This does not indicate that One Person is first in deity, because all are represented as being God. But the natural order is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The natural order in a home where there is recognition of the Divine order is husband, wife, and children. Since God is the God of order, absence of order in the Godhead would be unthinkable. Order in the Godhead can only mean that one is first, another second, and the other third. The order falls naturally in the revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many), But to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things [source], and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him” (I Cor. 8:5, 6). Paul distinguished heathen monotheism from polytheism, the heathen concept of gods.

The term unity is not easily explained. Unity may mean the numerical basis of calculation. It may mean the contrast between one thing and two other things of the same kind. It is also used in the sense of unit. Every one thing is made up of many parts, possesses many qualities, stands in various relations, and, although in itself it is only one thing, is also a part of many other things. Unity often indicates more than the antithesis of many. Although the unity of God means there is one God in opposition to the claims that there are many gods and lords, the phrase implies whatever internal distinctions may be in the essence of God. That essence is one, a whole, a unity in itself. Hence, when we say the Father is God, He is one essence. When we say the Son is God, He is one essence. When we say the Holy Spirit is God, He is one essence. There are three, and yet at the same time one.

The Divine Trinity explains the universe, consisting of many trinities in both the cosmos and man. We must understand that God is a Trinity in order to explain the trinities of the universe. The Bible begins with God: “IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1 NASB). Since the Divine Trinity is the Creator and Sustainer of both cosmos and man, both reflect the Trinity. Although both cosmos and man demand the Divine Trinity, they do not explain Him. Conversely, the Divine Trinity explains other trinities. We must go from God who is, to the universe which He created, to what the universe is, to what man is. The infinite Trinity has brought the trinity of the universe and the trinity of man into existence. God alone is infinite, and He cannot create infinity. The Divine trinity is not understood by other trinities, but they are understood by a limited comprehension of the Divine Trinity.

Since God’s thoughts are not man’s, the Holy Scriptures must never be brought down to the level of the natural sciences of geology, archeology, biology, physics, etc., in order to discover how the cosmos or man came into being. All the different ages, with all the occurrences of each, have been set by God’s word, and all the succeeding ages continue according to God’s eternal decree: “By faith we are understanding the ages to have been set in order by the word of God, so the things being seen [general revelation] have not come into existence out of things existing” (Heb. 11:3—translation).

There is no human philosophy of the Divine Trinity. All we know is what God has been pleased to reveal. God’s thoughts are not ours, and His ways are not ours (Is. 55:8, 9). No man has the

right to make a philosophy of the Divine Trinity out of his knowledge of either the trinities of the cosmos or man. In view of increasing knowledge in the various sciences related to the cosmos and man, there is great danger unless one sees the universe and man's relation to it in the light of the Triune God. With all this knowledge, men are incapable of coming to the knowledge of the truth of God, because they have been given a worthless mind pertaining to spiritual things. God's punishment is being revealed in that very area. If one cannot comprehend the proton, an elementary particle that is a fundamental constituent of the atomic nuclei, what about the electron which moves in its orbit around the proton in the atom a quadrillion times a second? If creation staggers the mind, what about the God who created it?

Can we have some understanding of the universe and its origin, structure, unity, laws, energies, etc., apart from the complicated terminologies of the sciences? What is the purpose of the universe? It is for those God chose in Christ before the world began. The earth was created for man. Why is the earth situated where it is in the vast amount of space? We are totally dependent on God who created all things and put all things in their places for the purpose of those He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. "O the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God; how unfathomable are His judgments and His ways untraceable. For who ever knew the mind of the Lord? or who became His counselor? or who first gave to Him, and it shall be repaid Him? Because out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to whom be the glory forever: Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36—translation). "Our Lord and God, you are worthy to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they exist and were created" (Rev. 4:11—translation).

The universe consists of space, matter, and time. Space times matter times time equals universe. Length times width times height equals space. Energy times motion times phenomena equals matter. Future times present times past equals time. It is possible to see their existence only in the light of the Divine Triunity—Father times Son times Holy Spirit equals God.

Man is a vital part of the universe. From the scientific point of view, man consists of nature, person, and personality. Nature times person times personality equals man. Nature is intellect times heart times will. Person is "I who know" times "self who I know" times "I who recognize by myself." Personality is the visible aspect where the nature and character are revealed. These things are beyond comprehension apart from what the Bible says about man.

Man from a Biblical perspective has a higher relation to God than the creation. The universe was created for the purpose of man. Man consists of body, soul, and spirit (I Thess. 5:23). Body times soul times spirit equals man, a trichotomous person. Man's body enables him to be universe conscious. Soul gives man the ability to be self-conscious. The spirit, which is the highest part of man, attains God-consciousness. Since natural law in God's decree is necessary to hold our physical creation together, is not the aspect of spiritual law in God's decree equally necessary to hold our spiritual creation in a fixed purpose and progress until it shall reach its consummation in the image of His Son?

The triune God created man after His own image: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). The word creation (*bara*) is used three times in the creation of man. Hence, the Scripture celebrates the creation of

trichotomous man through a threefold “God created.” The God-resemblance in created man was lost in the fall, but it was regained for the elect in redemption and regeneration. The spirit of man is where the holy God dwells by faith because the Christian believes what he neither sees nor feels.

The three parts of the tabernacle of Exodus portray the trinity of man. The external part of the tabernacle, which is typical of man’s body, was the only visible part to one approaching the tabernacle. The body is where the spirit and soul dwell. Inside the first room of the tabernacle, called the holy place, was light from the seven lamps of the lampstand. The soul is the holy place where the seven lamps of the lampstand portray our knowledge, perception, understanding, discernment, etc. After passing the veil between the holy place and the holy of holies, there was darkness. By faith the spirit of man is where the holy God dwells, because the Christian believes what he neither sees nor feels. This is the part of man enabled to be God-conscious. Conclusively, the Christian is God-conscious—spirit, self-conscious—soul, and world-conscious—body.

Man is an important part of God’s creation. He was the capstone. God gave man authority over His creation, but man forfeited it. Only Christians believe the Divine triunity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Anyone who does not embrace the Divine triunity is not Christian. Each Person in the Godhead is not a part of God. Each is God. The Father is God; The Lord Jesus Christ is God; The Holy Spirit is God. Since God is indivisible, each Person is the whole of God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three ways God acts, but they are three Persons who God is. In this unique Trinity, the Father is unseen. The only manifestation of God has been in Jesus Christ. The second Person in the Godhead is the One who acts. He was born of the virgin, died, arose, ascended, intercedes, will come again, judge, and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ presently works among men by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals the Son. The Holy Spirit is invisible. No one has ever seen Him.

Paul had been conscious of the world, whether religious or civil, in his unregenerate days. He was conscious of self in his deep conviction and conversion (Rom. 7). The apostle was made conscious of his riches in Christ Jesus in the great doctrinal section of Romans, especially chapter 8. There is nothing but world-consciousness in the unregenerate. Paul was made self-conscious by the law to which he was exposed, the result of which was that he saw what he was in the light of God’s holy and righteous law. He had a conversion experience that led him to embrace all the riches of God’s grace displayed in the great doctrinal section, and he was God-conscious. His self-consciousness and God-consciousness were the result of the work of grace in his heart.

Romans 8 has been called the greatest chapter in the Bible because of its doctrinal content. It is filled with trinities. The following outline portrays various trinities, most of which are taken from this chapter:

I. There is a threefold relation of redemption.

A. It is to the elect (Rom. 8:1-17).

B. It is to the creation (Rom. 8:18-25).

C. It is to the Creator who is also the covenant God (Rom. 8:26-30).

II. Redemption is threefold.

A. It is external (Rom. 8:1-4).

B. It is internal (Rom. 8:5-27).

C. It is eternal (Rom. 8:28-39).

III. There is a threefold groaning for full redemption.

A. Creation groans for liberty (Rom. 8:22).

B. The Christian groans for likeness (Rom. 8:23).

C. The Holy Spirit within us groans for our enlightenment (Rom. 8:26, 27).

IV. Redemption is by the three Persons in the Godhead.

A. The Father planned it (Eph. 1:3-6).

B. The Son purchased it (Eph. 1:7-12).

C. The Holy Spirit applies it (Eph. 1:13, 14; John 3:8).

V. The righteousness of God is by the Divine Trinity.

A. It is provided by God (Rom. 3:21-31).

B. It is imputed through the cross (Rom. 4:1-8).

C. It is imparted by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9).

VI. Three major doctrinal truths are taught in the doctrinal section of Romans.

A. Justification is taught (Rom. 3:24-26).

B. Sanctification is taught (Rom. 6:1-13).

C. Glorification is taught (Rom. 8:23, 24).

VII. The deliverance by God is threefold.

A. Justification is from the penalty of sin (past tense).

1. The Savior is seen on the cross in justification.
2. The elect are sons through justification.

B. Sanctification is from the power of sin (present tense).

1. The elect are saints through sanctification.
2. Self is on the cross in sanctification.

C. Glorification will be from the presence of sin (future tense).

1. The saints will be with Christ on His throne in glorification.
2. The elect will share Christ's eternal inheritance in glorification.

VIII. There is a threefold power of the Holy Spirit.

A. He has power over sin (Rom. 8:2).

B. He has power over the flesh (Rom. 8:4).

C. He has power over the body (Rom. 8:11-13).

IX. The Spirit's power is manifested three ways.

A. He saves (Rom. 8:2).

B. He sanctifies (Rom. 8:4-17).

C. He sustains (Rom. 8:26, 27).

X. There is a threefold death of the elect.

A. We are dead to sin but alive to God (Rom. 6:11).

B. We are dead to the law and married to Christ (Rom. 7:4).

C. We are dead to the flesh and led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:13, 14).



XI. There is a threefold aspect to salvation.

- A. Christ fulfilled the law “for” us in the law aspect (Rom. 5:19).
- B. Christ made the love of God available “to” us in the love aspect (Rom. 5:5).
- C. Christ by the Spirit implants the life aspect provided at Calvary “in” us (Rom. 8:9).

XII. There is a threefold restoration of all things.

- A. The soul is restored by regeneration (John 3:8).
- B. The body is restored by resurrection (I Cor. 15).
- C. The heavens and the earth are restored by re-Genesis (II Pet. 3:12, 13).

XIII. Access to God may be regarded in a threefold way.

- A. Access is “to” the Father (Rom. 5:1).
- B. Access is “through” the Son (Rom. 5:2).
- C. Access is “by” the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26, 27; Eph. 2:18).

XIV. Worship of God may be regarded in a threefold way.

- A. Worship includes singing.
  - 1. Singing includes sound theology.
  - 2. Singing includes true experience.
  - 3. Singing includes good poetry exemplified in the Psalms.
- B. Worship includes praying.
  - 1. Praying includes the Spirit of adoption, which enables one to cry, “Abba, Father.”
  - 2. Praying must be in the name of Jesus Christ.
  - 3. Praying is by the Holy Spirit.
- C. Worship includes studying the Scriptures.
  - 1. Studying the Scriptures requires the ability to hear.

2. Studying the Scriptures requires a consideration of the message which is heard.
3. Studying the Scriptures requires appropriation of that which is heard.

XV. Living for God is threefold.

- A. Union with Jesus Christ is necessary.
- B. Pruning is necessary.
- C. Service is necessary.

In closing the first part (Rom. 1:18-21) of Romans 1:18-32, Paul portrayed the unregenerate Gentiles as beginning with a knowledge of God, which proves what we previously said about verse 19. Nevertheless, they did not glorify God or give Him thanks: “Therefore, having known [*gnontes*, aorist active participle of *ginosko*, to know or have knowledge of] God they did not glorify or give thanks to Him as God, but they became vain in their reasonings, and the undiscerning heart of them was darkened” (Rom. 1:21—translation). Although the Gentiles knew God, they were without God. They knew God’s existence and some of His attributes, but natural understanding of spiritual things neither begets humility nor motivates gratitude. Both *doxadzo*, praise or glorify, and *eucharisteo*, give thanks or be grateful, are aorist active indicative verbs which have been negated by the adverb *ouch*. The indicative mood states the reality of the appalling fact. The aorist tense expresses the final decisiveness with which praise and gratitude were refused with determination. No line of argument more than man’s lack of reverence for God and his ingratitude for God can be adduced to show the inexcusableness of sin. Such rejection of the fact of God incapacitated the non-Jews concerning moral judgments, which explains the awful crimes we are witnessing in our time.

### **Punishment On Exchangers Of God’s Glory**

God’s punishment is being revealed against those who exchange the glory of the incorruptible God for a likeness of His creatures (Rom. 1:22, 23). God made man in His image; but man sought to make God in his image; and he sank lower by bowing to creatures lower than himself. Man seeks to satisfy his depraved instincts on his own humanistic level; and when that level does not satisfy, he becomes animalistic in his thinking. God’s description of man forever nailed shut the coffin of the theory of evolution. Evolution is a dead issue to every Christian; therefore, believers who are continually discussing the subject are in no way redeeming the time (Eph. 5:16).

The connection between the rejecters of general revelation (Rom. 1:18-21) and their exchanging God’s glory for a likeness of His creatures is another step lower in man’s degradation. Although they were “asserting (present active participle of *phasko*) themselves to be wise, they were made foolish” (Rom. 1:22). The verbs *mataioo*—“made worthless” (Rom. 1:21), *skotidzo*—“was darkened” (Rom. 1:21), and *moraino*—“made foolish” (Rom. 1:21), are aorist passive indicative verbs. The passive voice is used to indicate that the subjects were acted on; therefore, they were

neither acting (active voice) nor participating in the action (middle voice). Since men have become darkened in their understanding, they are anxious to exchange (*ellaxan*, aorist active indicative of *allasso*, can be either change or exchange—the context determines) (Rom. 1:23) God's glory on their depraved level. Does this mean that God made them worthless in their reasoning, darkened their understanding, and made them foolish? No! But in verses 24, 26, and 28, we are told that God "gave them over" (aorist active indicative of *paradidomi*, which means to give over, abandon, or deliver up), signifying that He removed all restraints thus allowing Satan, to whom they had been obedient, to make them more worthless, give them greater darkness of understanding, and influence them to commit greater foolish acts of sin.

There are people who pride themselves in their culture and pay slavish tribute to decorum and diplomatic formality, but they utterly fail to acknowledge God for who He is and all that He is doing in providence. Such failure is prevalent in the intellectual, social, and religious realms. This kind of degradation describes men who put light not "under a bushel" but under a "dunghill." Although men who abuse the light of nature will experience a great punishment in their own sins, those who are exposed to God's special revelation but reject it will experience a much heavier punishment.

No image can ever be made of the invisible God; therefore, God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Ex. 20:3, 4). Jesus Christ alone is the exact image of the invisible God, and only by a God-given faith can He be seen and understood (Heb. 1:3; John 1:18).

The transition from theology to anthropology is natural. Scripture does not present an abstract revelation of God but a disclosure of God in relation to man. Therefore, the knowledge of man in relation to God is essential to properly understand anthropology. In the consideration of anthropology, the Biblical principle of going from God to man (Gen. 1:1, 2, 6, 27) and not from man to God must not be ignored, because it supposes God to account for man and not man for God. It never leaves us with the task of proving God's existence from man's existence. Understanding this basic principle eliminates the idea that God can be found by physical analysis. Since love finds love, the "pure in heart...shall see [*opsontai*, future middle indicative of *horao*, to see, understand, or experience] God" (Matt. 5:8). As love cannot be found by the use of a microscope or music be collected with a magnet, scientists cannot find God with their incorrect instruments for the search.

Man did not come into existence by his own initiative. If he had, he would have been both the cause and the effect. Moreover, if man first made himself, why did he limit himself? If the first man made himself, he would have been able to support himself; and it could not be said, "For in Him [God] we are living [present active indicative of *dzaο*, to live or remain alive] and being moved [present passive indicative of *kineo*, to move], and are having our existence [present active indicative of *eimi*, to be]" (Acts 17:28—translation). Some say the verb *kinoumetha* is middle voice (we move ourselves) and others say it is passive voice (we are being moved). Surely those who oppose the use of the passive voice have overlooked some passages of Scripture, such as Psalm 119:116-117, Proverbs 16:1, Proverbs 20:24, and Jeremiah 10:23-24.

The idea of man's being either above God or equal with Him is excluded by the terms "image" and "likeness" in which man was created (Gen. 1:26, 27). A theological fact is that man in his original state was the most excellent of all God's earthly creatures; but man in his fallen and depraved state is most miserable and despicable. In the study of man created in God's image, distinction must be made between the wonderful organism called human nature and the direction in which that nature moved in original uprightness. Adam's original uprightness was finite; therefore, apart from redemptive grace he moved in the power of finite uprightness; and he sinned by the freedom of his will. Hence, Adam lost his original uprightness in the fall, and this loss resulted in the reversal of his nature. His nature remained an instrument of being which now worked against rather than for God. Having fallen in Adam, every person outside of Jesus Christ works against God.

### **Punishment On Degraders Of Their Bodies**

God's punishment is being revealed against those who degrade their bodies to satisfy their hearts' evil passions; and as their punishment, they are given over to their unrestrained desires (Rom. 1:24-27). Sins are the fruit of sin; evil acts come from the source, man's evil nature. The heart, its thoughts, and the imaginations of the thoughts are evil (Jer. 17:9; Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Contrary to modern day psychology, corrupted man defiles society rather than a polluted society corrupting man. One cannot deny that either reacts powerfully on the other, but the corruption in both man and society has the same common source—solidarity with Adam in original sin.

Sin is not an evil monster (anything unnatural or monstrous) that creeps on man from without; it is the manifestation of a monstrous nature which comes from within man. There is in every person a degenerate propensity to everything that is evil, but that does not mean there is an equal tendency for every kind of sin. Therefore, the noncommittal of a particular sin is not for the want of a depraved principle, but it is because of either God's restraining providence from without or His restraining grace from within. At whatever stage we contemplate the sin nature, from the womb to the coffin, it wears the stamp of depravity. Hence, man's depraved nature must be viewed in a threefold way: (1) in its connection with Adam (Rom. 5:12), (2) in its formation in us (Gen. 5:3), and (3) in its fruit in our lives (Gal. 5:19-21).

Man by nature can do nothing but sin. If there were no Satan to tempt or evil example to imitate, there is an innate principle in man so that he cannot cease sinning. Depraved man must do what his depraved nature wills, because he not only has the love of sin to motivate him but also the law of sin to constrain him. (See Jer. 9:5; John 3:19; Rom. 8:2; II Pet. 2:14.) Every person coming into the world of mankind is a transgressor from the womb. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Ps. 58:3). Not only is every person alienated from God as he comes into the world, but his mother conceived him in sin (Ps. 51:5). That means as soon as one begins to exist, he is a child of wrath corrupted by original sin. Hence, he has the guilt of the first sin which has been imputed to him, and he has the nature of sin imparted in him.

The subject of depravity is hated by the unregenerate, including the religious unregenerate. Those who oppose the truth of the depravity of infants born into the world make statements

based on human reason: (1) They say that infants are simply in the same state as Adam before the fall. (2) They declare that Adam's sin is no reason why God should impute it to infants. (3) They assert that it is absurd to think that by one man's disobedience many should be made disobedient. (4) They question, since sin is voluntary and birth is involuntary, how can an infant be a sinner? (5) They argue that an infant being accounted guilty of a sin he did not commit is against all sense of justice. (6) They say that a just God would never appoint a person to hell for original sin. (7) They believe that children are safe until they reach the age of accountability. Such statements satisfy human reason, but one must not lose sight of the fact that human wisdom and Divine wisdom are on a continual collision course. The outcome has always been and always will be that those who assert themselves to be wise shall be made foolish by Divine wisdom (Rom. 1:22).

Deliberately committed sin (Rom. 1:22, 23) becomes debasing and disgusting (vv. 24-27). Having turned their backs on the continual witness of God in nature, the Gentiles could travel only one direction—down. Their downward course has brought them to the lowest stage of depravity in which they not only practice the worst sins described in Scripture, but they also approve those who practice them. Now, we can understand the meaning of the depraved, undiscerning heart being darkened (v. 21). The witness of God in nature never deviates. It is as though one day took up where the preceding one left it. The Psalmist said, "THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge" (Ps. 19:1, 2). The silent witness of nature creates no heterodoxy. On the other hand, language is different; because in the realm of human responsibility, man creates heterodoxies while saying they are only a matter of semantics. It would be wonderful if men were as consistent in their witness of God's objective message in Scripture as nature is in its renewal every day and night in its universal proclamation of its message.

Verse 24 begins with *dio*, a conjunction which may be translated "therefore," "for this reason," or "on account of." Hence, God gave the Gentiles over for these reasons: (1) their apostasy from God's punishment being revealed from heaven against every kind of ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and (2) nature's consistent revelation of God's power and deity, which was evident in them. The Gentiles had both an objective and a subjective witness which rendered them inexcusable before the God of creation.

God's punishment is never operative except in His retribution for sin. Here it is against a life of uncleanness, which presupposes the existence of uncleanness, and the penalty consists in the fact that God "gave them over" (*paredoken*, aorist active indicative of *paradidomi*, which means to give over, abandon, or deliver up) to a life of uncleanness because of the lusts of their hearts (v. 24). The two prepositions *en* and *eis* in the Greek text must be carefully studied in order to properly understand and translate verse 24. "For this reason God gave them over because of [*en*, the instrumental of cause] the lusts [*epithumias*, instrumental feminine plural of *epithumia*, a noun which means lust, desire, or passion] of their hearts [*kardion*, ablative feminine plural of *kardia*, the source of their corrupt passions] for the purpose of [*eis*, accusative of purpose, which denotes action] immoralities [*akatharsian*, accusative feminine plural of *akatharsia*, impurity or immorality] to be degrading [*atimadzesthai*, present passive infinitive of *atimadzo*, dishonor,

treat shamefully, or degrade] their bodies among [*en*, instrumental of association] themselves” (Rom. 1:24—translation).

The degrading lifestyle of the Gentiles did not originate with God’s abandonment; however, God was not completely passive in the terrible development of human degradation. God positively withdrew His restraint, as He did with Pharaoh. (See the book entitled, THE MOST NEGLECTED CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE.) Furthermore, God’s abandonment cannot mean a mere permission; it was not a single abstention (neither for nor against), seeing that He positively withdrew all restraint. Having been left to themselves, the corrupt stream that carried them further into degradation was not from without, but it came from within their depraved hearts. As a result, that which was in their hearts by the power of Satan ran wild when God’s restraint was removed.

The attitude and action of God in relation to guilt must be contemplated in order to understand punishment. God’s attitude is expressed in His wrath (Rom. 1:18). Wrath is God’s antagonism to everything that is evil. The present tense and passive voice of *apokalupto*, “is being revealed,” pertaining to punishment, proves that God continually brings man’s sin to light. God’s action, which is a manifestation of His attitude, is stated in the expression, “God gave them over.” The Divine verdict on such apostates from general revelation is that the ones practicing such things are deserving of death (Rom. 1:32). If men do not retain just thoughts of the glory of God, they will not retain a just idea of the natural honor of man. As a result, they will dishonor themselves as they have dishonored God.

Persons given over by God for the purpose of immoralities exchange the truth of God for the lie (Rom. 1:25). This is evidenced by their worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator. Having declared themselves independent of God, God gave them over to passions of dishonor, evidenced among both women and men. The Bible represents homosexuality as the lowest form of human life. Scripture in the Old Testament portrays it as abomination: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (Lev. 18:22). “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death...” (Lev. 20:13). Although any kind of sexual perversion is an abomination to God, the unnaturalness of homosexuality makes it the lowest form of life. Surely we have not forgotten Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18; 19).

Either practicing or excusing homosexuality is sin. Sodomy is the rejection of God’s design for this world, another illustration of the abandoned ones exchanging God’s truth for the lie. Religious idolatry is expressed in terms of sexual perversion (Ezek. 16). The heterosexual relationship of marriage was designed for the propagation of the human race, and it is given as the nearest human illustration of the intimacy which God provides for man with Himself in the covenant of grace (Eph. 5:22-33). Therefore, whoredom is the concept applied to worshipping other gods; but sodomy is the rejection of any concept of a god to whom man is accountable.

Operating from a Biblical foundation, it is imperative that Christians speak definitively about a number of questions being asked today:

1. Is anyone born a homosexual? The answer is “no”. Adoption of a perverted life-style manifests God’s having given that one up to the evil passions of his heart and his exchanging the truth of God for the lie. Medical reports of research concerning homosexuality can never make the eternal word invalid.

2. How should Christians deal with homosexuality? Sins must be called by Biblical names. Euphemisms, such as “gay” and “another life-style,” do not offend Sodomites. Religionists with their sweet nothings give nothing the Holy Spirit can use; furthermore, their thinking they are more caring and loving than God benefits no one.

3. How should assemblies deal with homosexuals? They must excommunicate any member practicing sodomy. No one is of value who does not value God and His truth.

4. What should the attitude of Christians be toward the judicial decisions regarding sodomy? No law passed by men that establishes sodomy as an acceptable, alternate life-style can be honored by Christians.

5. What should the attitude of Christians be concerning sexual diseases? The answer is given in Romans 1:26-27—“For this reason God gave them over to passions of disgrace; for even their females exchanged the natural function for that which is contrary to nature, and likewise also the males having left the natural use of the female they were inflamed in their desire toward one another, males with males committing shameless acts and receiving in return [present active participle of *apolambano*, to receive in return] the punishment [*antimisthian*, accusative feminine singular of *antimisthia*, punishment] in themselves required by their error which was being proper [*edei*, imperfect active indicative of *deo*, necessary, right and proper, or necessity brought on by either circumstances or conduct]” (translation). Venereal diseases, including AIDS, are a manifestation of God’s punishment brought about by immoral conduct (v. 27). God’s wrath is being revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness as a warning to the living, but that does not indicate that their punishment stops with death.

6. Is there a contradiction between Romans 1 and I Corinthians 6:9-10? The latter passage states: “Or have you not known that unrighteous ones shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate men [*malakoi*, nominative masculine plural of *malakos*, an adjective used as a pronoun describing persons who are perverted by allowing themselves to be misused homosexually] nor homosexuals [*arsenokoitai*, nominative masculine plural noun of *arsenokoites*, a male who practices homosexuality]...shall inherit the kingdom of God” (translation). Paul described some of the Corinthians’ former position in those verses: “And some were these things; but you cleansed yourselves, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (v. 11—translation). According to I Corinthians 1:18-31, God saves whom He pleases, such as Rahab the whore, Paul the religious murderer, etc., but those He saves do not continue in the sins from which they have been delivered. The saved are separated from their sins: “...he [Jesus Christ] shall save his people from [*apo*, dative of separation] their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Therefore, receiving homosexuals into assemblies, ordaining them to the ministry, condoning their life-style, etc., is nothing short of blasphemy.

## **Punishment On Assumers That Knowledge Of God Is Worthless**

God is manifesting His punishment against those who do not think it worthwhile to have Him in their knowledge: “And since they did not think it worthwhile [*edokimasan*, aorist active indicative of *dokimadzo*, to approve, deem worthy, test, or examine] to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a worthless [*adokimon*, accusative masculine singular of *adokimos*, not standing the test, unqualified, worthless, vain, or base] mind, to be practicing the things not being proper” (Rom. 1:28—translation). The blindness of the heathen is the same in every age, because it comes from depraved hearts. There is a generic likeness of depravity in all men regardless of the time period. Satan is wise enough to give his slaves substitute gods that will please the various peoples of pagan countries and the races of so-called civilized nations. Whether they are gods of an unrefined nature, such as planets or creatures lower than man, gods of a more refined nature, or the various philosophies of men, they are all false gods. Although the civilized criticize the uncivilized concerning their unscientific knowledge, the civilized are worshipping the gods of their own inventions. Uncivilized or civilized, all unregenerate people are pagans who worship false gods. The civilized trying to improve the uncivilized when they themselves are uncivilized is sad because they themselves are worshipping their own false gods. In Biblical language, the blind are leading the blind, and both shall fall into the pit (Matt. 15:14; Luke 6:39).

Although the so-called civilized people of the world outnumber the uncivilized, one cannot escape what the Scripture says about increasing knowledge: “...many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan. 12:4). Natural knowledge has vastly increased. It has been said that the first doubling of knowledge took place about 1750. It doubled again by 1900, again by 1950, and again by 1960. Since then it has been developing so fast that no one has calculated the number of times.

The inspired word correctly describes man’s knowledge and self-esteem as, “Always learning and never being able to come to a full knowledge of the truth” (II Tim. 3:7—translation). With all the addition of knowledge, there has been no advance in knowledge concerning the truth of God; on the contrary, with every expansion of natural knowledge, there has been a multiplication of sin. “And because lawlessness [accusative singular of *anomia*, wickedness, lawlessness, or sin] is to be increased [aorist passive infinitive of *plethuno*, used transitively—without a direct object; in the passive voice, it means be multiplied or increased] the love of many shall become cold” (Matt. 24:12—translation). With an advance of sin, there is an increase in the revelation of God’s present wrath, and wrath is also being stored up by the ungodly for themselves awaiting the day of wrath and the revelation of God’s righteous judgment (Rom. 2:5).

Paul did not expect things in this world of human depravity and corruption to change for the better. All the promises made by so-called civilized politicians and statesmen about building a better society or world of mankind is empty propaganda. The current of the river of unregenerate people can travel in only one direction—down. How can the so-called civilized people be honest in their attitude in the light of the teaching of Holy Scripture? They can be optimistic only by discounting the truth of God, considering it unworthy of any civilized person; and that is exactly what they are doing. Hence, the stream of unregenerate people is headed for the great fall that



goes instantly into the pit of everlasting destruction from the presence of the One they deem unworthy of their consideration.

Interpretation should never be more or less than what Divine revelation has recorded. One of the great temptations of assembly members and preachers in our day of “the cover-up” is their withholding some things for fear of offending people. Their excuse is that they must be tactful in order to influence people. Scripture does not teach that Christians can influence unregenerate people to become Christians, but it does teach that sheep recognize and rejoice in God’s truth. The fact that the gospel is God’s power resulting in a salvation experience in the heart which has been prepared by the Spirit of regeneration gives boldness and confidence to God-called servants of Jesus Christ. Bondslaves of Christ are more concerned about pleasing the Captain of our salvation than trying to influence the unregenerate to become believers by “their faith.”

God gives people over to a worthless mind when they do not consider the knowledge of God worthwhile. They do improper things and become filled with all unrighteousness. Paul used the perfect passive participial form of the verb *pleroo*, which means to become filled or full (Rom. 1:29). The perfect tense points to a time in the past when God gave them over to a worthless mind; furthermore, they remain in a continuous state of being full of unrighteousness. The passive voice signifies that when God gave them over to Satan by removing all restraint, their being filled was accomplished by Satan himself (Eph. 2:1-3). Hence, those given over to Satan by God become passive dupes, easily deceived by the Devil.

The following four things are infused by the Devil into worthless minds:

1. He indoctrinates them in unrighteousness (*adikia*, injustice or unrighteousness) (Rom. 1:29). Persons filled with no sense of what is right, do only what is right in their own eyes; and they have pleasure in unrighteousness. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes...” (Prov. 12:15). “And for this cause God is sending to them a working of error for them to believe the lie, in order that the ones not having believed but having had pleasure in unrighteousness may be judged” (II Thess. 2:11, 12—translation).
2. He instills wickedness (*poneria*, the baseness and depravity of the heart and mind) in them (Rom. 1:29), which reveals the depth of depravity (Luke 11:39; Eph. 6:12). This evil cancer unconsciously spreads through every fiber of the person who has been given over to a worthless mind.
3. His enduement of covetousness (*pleonexia*, an inordinate desire for riches, extortion, or overreaching) (Rom. 1:29) is the sphere in which the worthless mind works, because it has been trained in its crafty ways: “Having eyes full of an adulteress and unceasing from sin, alluring unstable souls, having a heart which has been trained [perfect passive participle of *gumnadzo*, to train or exercise vigorously] in covetousness, children of a curse” (II Pet. 2:14—translation). Please observe the perfect passive form of the verb *gumnadzo*, signifying that the training of the mind in crafty ways was a finished transaction in past time with a continuing result.
4. Evil (*kakia*) (Rom. 1:29) inserted by Satan is the desire to injure because the mind-set is against everything that is right and just.

Following the portrayal of worthless minds which have been filled with the general characteristics of depravity, Paul moved on to describe five specific ways in which depravity manifests itself (v. 29b). Those specific ways are preceded by the adjective *mestous*, accusative masculine plural of *mestos*, which means each of the following sins is full: (1) The sin of envy (genitive singular of *phthonos*, envy, jealousy, or spite) is full. The unregenerate live in a state of envy, jealousy, and spite. (2) The sin of murder (genitive singular of *phonos*, murder or killing) is full, indicating that depraved men are homicidal. (3) The sin of strife (genitive singular of *eris*, strife, fighting, or quarreling) is full. (4) The sin of deceit (genitive singular of *dolos*, deceit, treachery, craft, or trickery) is full. (5) The sin of malignity (genitive singular of *kakoetheia*, is made up of *kakos*, evil, bad, wrong, or troublesome, and *ethos*, a customary abode, dwelling place, or customary state) is full. In this case, it would be a malicious state of mind.

In concluding the list of characteristics and specific ways in which depravity works, Paul described the persons with worthless minds who commit specific sins (Rom. 1:29-31).

1. He called them whisperers (accusative plural of the noun *psithuristes*, one who bears secret slander against another). This noun is used only in this verse. Another noun is used in II Corinthians 12:20.
2. He identified them as slanderers (accusative plural of the pronominal adjective *katalalos*, one who speaks evil of another).
3. He classified them as God-haters (accusative plural of the adjective *theostuges*, haters of God).
4. He called them insulters (accusative plural of the noun *hubris*, insult or outrage). Hatred for God is the essence of sin, as the love of God is the essence of holiness.
5. He described them as arrogant (accusative plural of the pronominal adjective *huperephanos*, arrogant or proud).
6. He characterized them as boasters (accusative plural of the noun *aladzon*, a boaster or self-exalter).
7. He called them inventors (accusative plural of the noun *epheuretes*, one who schemes, plans, invents, or contrives) of evil things (genitive plural of the pronominal adjective *kakos*, bad, evil, or worthless).
8. He analyzed them as disobedient to parents (dative masculine plural of the noun *goneus*, which means parent, and accusative masculine plural of the adjective *apeithes*, disobedient or rebellious).
9. He identified them as being without understanding (accusative plural of the adjective *asunetos*, without understanding or senseless).
10. He called them faithless (accusative plural of the adjective *asunthetos*, faithless or disloyal in keeping promises).

11. He signified that they are without natural affection (accusative plural of the adjective *astorgos*, inhuman or lacking normal human affection). (See II Tim. 3:3.)

12. He identified them as unmerciful (accusative plural of the adjective *aneleemon*, unmerciful). Such persons are cruel and unmerciful.

### **Punishment On Those Completely Knowing God's Requirement**

God is revealing His requirement against sinners because they have known completely that they are deserving of death: "Who knowing completely the requirement of God, that the ones practicing such things are deserving of death, not only are doing them, but are giving approval to the ones practicing them" (Rom. 1:32—translation). This verse is a summary of verses 18-31. When God's restraint is removed, all depraved humanity has left is debased instincts. They value corruption more than God, and they give approval with those who think and practice what they think and practice. What can be worse than wicked people admiring themselves in other wicked people?

One of the three important things about sinners in Romans 1:32 is that they know completely God's requirement. What about those who say they do not believe in God? The light of reason that God gives to men to understand other things enables them to understand the existence of God (John 1:9). There is a subjective knowledge of God in every man (Rom. 1:21). Existence itself does not demand a cause, but the coming into existence of that which was nonexistent demands a cause. Therefore, the universe owes its existence to a cause outside of itself. A man once began his argument against the existence of God by saying, "I am an atheist, God knows." One who denies the existence of God is like a man who walks outside his home and declares no one lives there because he cannot see anyone inside. Furthermore, as there is no true atheist, there is a complete knowledge of God's requirement in every person.

The second of the three important things about sinners in Romans 1:32 is that every sinner knows that the ones practicing the things mentioned in Romans 1:21-31 are deserving of death. The relative pronominal adjective "who" (*hoitines*, nominative masculine plural of *hostis*, a combination of the pronouns *hos*, who, which, or what and *tis*, a certain one or someone) indicates that Paul was speaking of certain ones who had this general witness of God in them (1:19, 20) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man and the creatures lower than man. Their rejection of God caused Him to give them over to the lusts of their hearts and a worthless mind (1:24-28). Consider the testimony of the repentant criminal who was hanged: "And one of the hanged criminals was blaspheming Him saying, If you are the Christ, save yourself and us. But answering, the other rebuking him said, Do you not fear God, since you are in the same judgment? And we indeed justly, for we receive things deserving of what we did; but this one did nothing wrong" (Luke 23:39-41—translation). The testimony of everyone who stands before the white throne judgment of God will be "guilty as charged."

The last of the three important things about sinners in Romans 1:32 is that the ones sinning by giving approval to others practicing the same sins is the same as the wicked admiring themselves

in other wicked people. The unregenerate love those who love them. Christ said to His disciples, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own...” (John 15:19 NASB). As none look with as much interest and pleasure at the works of art as artists, no one approves with so much pleasure the sins of others as the practitioner of sin. The great concern of sinners is that evil may continue. It is said that Tiberius, the Roman emperor from 14 A.D. through 37 A.D., took particular pleasure in his old age in seeing other men do evil things.

## GUILT AND CONDEMNATION OF THE JEWS - *Romans 2*

The non-Jews, whether civilized or uncivilized, were under the wrath of God which is being continually revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18-32). The religious hypocrites (Jews) judging the heathen were also under God's wrath inasmuch as they could not defend their own evil practices (Rom. 2). Unlike the irreligious heathen, the religious Jews were under greater condemnation because they had more than general revelation; they also had special revelation given to them in the law of Moses.

Paul's expression, "O man," in his address of Romans 2:1 and 3 is used generically. "Therefore [*dio* comes from the preposition *dia* and the pronoun *ho*; it means for this reason, on which account, or therefore] O man [*ho* is an interjection used in a direct address to express emotion, and *anthrope*, vocative case of address, is masculine singular of the noun *anthropos*, man], you are without excuse, everyone who is judging; for that in which you are judging another, you are passing judgment on yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.... And consider this, O man, the one judging those who practice such things and doing the same, that you shall escape the judgment of God?" (translation). The hypocrisy of one man represents every human being who is a Pharisee. Paul did not identify the man in his personal address until verse 17—"Since you call yourself a Jew and rest in the law and boast in God" (translation). Judgment by the religious Pharisee was blind and arrogant, because he supposed he was free from condemnation as a result of possessing the oracles of God and enjoying national privileges. He has his representatives among professing Christians who belong to denominational institutions, have Bibles in their homes, and occasionally attend religious services.

"O man" is a deathblow to the Woman's Liberation Movement and all its religious sympathizers. Religious leaders and others are exchanging the masculine gender in the Bible for general terms which deny that man is the head of the woman (I Cor. 11:1-16; I Tim. 2:10-13).

The only true judgment in this world is that permitted to those who uphold God's revealed standard and faithfully describe sin. All other judgments are prejudicial, blind to the Divine standard, and arrogant because of unwarrantable claims to superior rights. Therefore, contrasts between God's and man's judgments must be considered.

God's judgment is according to truth; man's judgment apart from grace is hypocritical. God personified truth in Jesus Christ: "...I am the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:6). Christians are sanctified in the sphere of the truth (John 17:17). The truth men hear shall judge them in the last day (John 12:48). God's judgment is according to truth (Rom. 2:2). Conversely, man perverts truth (Gal. 1:6-9). Man's judgment draws a veil over his own evil deeds while he condemns the same sins in others. The religious Jews said, "...We have a law, and according to our law He is obligated to die, because He claimed Himself Son of God" (John 19:7—

translation). They were blind but zealous to have Jesus Christ, the One in whom the law was fulfilled, put to death.

God's judgment is certain; man's judgment may be evaded. There is a future in every past; therefore, none can escape the judgment of God. An evil past futurizes itself in the righteous judgment of God. An evil past, which is common to all by nature, is canceled by redemption for the elect alone. No sinner can have a good future unless Jesus Christ became his substitute at Calvary. All who die outside of Jesus Christ will have their sinful past futurized in everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (Acts 17:31; II Thess. 1:8, 9; Heb. 9:27). Men often escape lawful human judgment in time by lying about their guilt and hiring lawyers to lie for them. Although they may escape lawful human judgment, they cannot escape God's appointed judgment added to their present punishment being revealed from heaven.

The following are principles of God's judgment recorded in Romans 2:1-3:8. (1) His judgment is according to truth (2:1, 2). (2) It is certain (2:3). (3) It is righteous (2:4, 5). (4) It is according to works (2:6-10). (5) It is without respect of persons (2:11-13). (6) It unveils all secrets (2:14-16). (7) God's judgment is the just condemnation of hypocrisy (2:17-24), religious rites (2:25-29), and unbelief of the Jews (3:1-8).

### **Judged According To Truth**

God's judgment is according to truth revealed in Holy Scripture (Rom. 2:1, 2). "But we have known [*oidamen*, perfect active indicative of *oida*, to know, understand, or perceive] that the judgment of God is according to truth on the ones practicing such things" (v. 2—translation). The perfect verb *oidamen*, "we have known," is used in the intensive sense, thus emphasizing the results of knowing in the present, not the point of action of knowing in the past. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of truth—truth personified (John 1:14; 14:6); and He is the One to whom all judgment has been committed (John 5:22). Persons who have no interest in Divine truth also have no interest in justice. Jesus Christ is incarnate truth, and He has given us the word of truth (Eph. 1:13; James 1:18). Truth endures not only to all generations (Ps. 100:5) but also forever (Ps. 117:2).

Paul was not condemning judgment of others, but he was disapproving of those who do not first judge themselves. Christ's statement "Judge not" of Matthew 7:1 is not an absolute prohibition. If that were true, the whole world would be given into the hands of the wicked; unrighteousness would flourish; and heresy would abound. Scripture teaches that civil authority includes judges and magistrates (Rom. 13:1-7), and the assemblies have the authority to judge false teaching (II Pet. 2:1), false spirits (I John 4:1-3), false ways (Prov. 14:12), false professors of faith (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 8:13; John 2:23-25), and false living by assembly members (Matt. 18:15-18; I Cor. 5:12). All judgment must be in harmony with the principles of Holy Scripture.

### **The Certainty Of God's Judgment**

God's judgment is certain (Rom. 2:3). No one practicing the evils of Romans 1:18-31 "...shall escape the wrath of God" (Rom. 2:3). Punishment in time does not prevent eternal punishment. God has appointed a day in which He shall judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by Jesus

Christ (Acts 17:31; Heb. 9:27). The appointed time for judgment does not mean there will be one combined judgment of sinners and saints, which many call “a general judgment.” There is a difference between “a great white throne [*thronos*]” of Revelation 20:11 and “the tribunal [*bema*, judgment seat] of Christ” (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10). The idea of a general judgment makes no distinction between sinners and saints, the degree of crimes, and the different times when the judgments are executed. There will be neither common punishment in hell nor common rewards in heaven.

### **The Righteousness Of God’s Judgment**

God’s judgment is righteous: “Or are you treating with contempt the kindness and the forbearance and the longsuffering of His wealth, not knowing that the kindness of God is leading you to repentance? But on the basis of your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up for yourself punishment in a day of punishment and revelation of a righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:4, 5—translation). “...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). “...for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity” (Ps. 98:9).

The Greek verb for “treating with contempt” (*kataphroneis*) in Romans 2:4 is a present active indicative of *kataphroneo*, a compound verb made up of the preposition *kata*, meaning down, and the verb *phroneo*, meaning to think or judge. To think down means to have low or degrading thoughts about God. The Psalmist, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, vividly described Christ’s second advent in Psalm 50. The mighty covenant God shall cease to be silent at His time. Between the introduction (Ps. 50:1-6) and the conclusion (vv. 22, 23), God is disclosed as judging His people (vv. 7-15) and condemning the wicked (vv. 16-21). God’s judgment always begins with His people, whether they are from national Israel under the old covenant or from professing Christendom in the age of the assembly. God’s people are given credit for what they do (v. 8), but they shall be blamed for the way they do (vv. 9-13) what should be done (vv. 14, 15). How horrendous that those in whose midst Christ’s miracles were performed were the very people who crucified the Son of God as an imposter. Furthermore, they challenged Christ to work miracles in support of His claim, but he refused. (See Matt. 12:38, 39; 16:1-4). The wicked are described in Psalm 50:16-21, and the climax of the wicked religionists is given in verse 21—“These things you have done, and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you...” (NASB). This is a Divine commentary on Romans 2:4—“Or are you treating with contempt the kindness and the forbearance and the longsuffering of His wealth...” (translation). Religionists today who look down on God are those who say God was a man, Christ was peccable, and God cannot do anything for man until man first exercises his will. All these have degrading thoughts about the sovereign God of Holy Scripture, and they shall not escape God’s punishment.

Three Greek nouns were used by Paul to define characteristics of God about which the hypocrites were having degrading thoughts: (1) He used the noun *chrestotes*, which means kindness or that which is right, six times in reference to God (Rom. 2:4; 11:22—3 times; Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4). In all these references “kindness” seems to be the better translation. (2) The noun *anochē*, which means forbearance or toleration, comes from the verb *anechomai*, made up of the preposition *ana*, up or above, and *echomai*, to hold back or delay (Rom. 2:4; 3:26). (3) The noun *makrothumia* means patience, patient enduring of evil, or longsuffering. It comes from the verb

*makrothumeo*, which is derived from *makros*, distant or far off, and *thumos*, a strong passion or emotion of the mind, anger, or wrath. Although God is slow to become angry, His punishment is sure. Paul understood God's longsuffering from personal experience, "But because of this [chief of sinners—I Tim. 1:15] I was shown mercy, in order that in me as chief Jesus Christ may demonstrate all longsuffering [*makrothumia*], for an example of the ones destined to believe on Him because of eternal life" (I Tim. 1:16—translation). Every Christian can relate with Paul in his recognition of God's longsuffering to the elect.

Subsequent to discussing the hypocrite's intelligence, reasoning, and understanding in his degrading thoughts about God, Paul showed that God's judgment grows out of what man by nature is and does (Rom 2:5). Man's depraved nature is actively engaged in evil. The depravity of the heart is described by the noun "hardness" (*skleroteta*, accusative feminine singular of *sklerotes*, hardness or stubbornness). Ezekiel described the unregenerate person as having "a heart of stone" (Ezek. 36:26). Such a heart is cold, impenetrable, and unyielding to spiritual things. Although the religious hypocrite may not be wallowing in the mire of some of the sins of Romans 1:24-27, he is twice dead: "These men are hidden rocks in your love feasts, feasting together with you feeding themselves without fear, waterless clouds being carried by winds, fruitless autumn trees having died twice who have been uprooted, wild waves of the sea foaming up their shames, wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved forever" (Jude 12, 13—translation). The statement "having died twice" refers first to what man is naturally in Adam and then to what he is by vain profession. Therefore, the Pharisees "encircle sea and land to make one convert, and when he may become one, you make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves" (Matt. 23:15—translation). The natural knowledge of spiritual things increases blindness; hence, there is a double measure of punishment for those who die this double death.

Paul not only gave the Bible's description of the hardness of the heart, but he also showed by using the adjective *ametanoeton* that the heart is unrepentant. This adjective is accusative feminine singular of *ametanoetos*, which means unrepentant, obstinate, or admitting no change of mind. It is derived from the Greek words *a*, which negates repentance, the preposition *meta*, which means with, and the verb *noeo*, which means to think, consider, or think on. This adjective is used to describe the fact of human depravity. Hence, man is not depraved because he is hardened or impenitent, but he is hardened and impenitent because he is depraved. Therefore, man is condemned because of his depraved nature. In the light of this, man is not condemned for the lack of remedy but in consideration of his innate sinful nature. Man began with a sinful nature when he began to be: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5 NASB). The truth of the inborn sinful nature destroys the frequently repeated religious theory, "It is not the sin question but the Son question."

The heart of depraved man is not only hard and impenitent, but it also treasures up wrath—punishment—by its activity in evil. The heart is more than the center of one's nature; it is the whole of his personality: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). As the natural consequence of the cultivation of moral excellence is moral excellence, the natural consequence of indulgence in sin is sin. This is a warning to sinners. These are common expressions: "Sin and enjoy it because you live only once"; "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die"; "get all the gusto you can because you go



around only once.” However, Scripture teaches that the greater degree to which one sins, the greater his punishment will be in eternity. “...you are storing up for yourself punishment in a day of punishment and revelation of a righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5—translation). The verb “store up” is *thesauridzo*, and it means to store up, treasure up, or accumulate.

Christ used both the verb (*thesauridzo*) and the noun (*thesauros*) forms for “store up” in Matthew 6:19-21—“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves dig through and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (translation). Peter used the verb in II Peter 3:7—“But the present heavens and earth have been stored with fire are being kept for a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (translation). The correct attitude toward a precious deposit (*thesauros*) can come only from a new heart. A new heart means there has been a change in the whole inner nature of man. Thus, the intelligence, darkened by depravity, has been enlightened. The affections, cold, insensitive, and unyielding to spiritual things, are made tender, sensitive, and yielding to spiritual things. The will which was selfish has been changed from self-will to the desire for God’s will.

Every Christian can relate with the statement, “No one will ever go to heaven whose heart has not been there before,” because his citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). The only true investment for one who has everlasting existence in his heart must be in the eternal kingdom. Conversely, all who live for themselves and the pleasure of sin are not only accumulating a greater degree of punishment, but the present heavens and earth have also been permanently stored with the fire of judgment for their punishment.

### **Judged According To Works**

God’s judgment corresponds with man’s works: “Who will give to everyone according to his deeds: On one hand eternal life to the ones who because of perseverance in good work are seeking glory and honor and incorruptibility eternal life; on the other hand anger and wrath on the ones who out of selfish ambition are disobeying the truth, but who are being obedient to unrighteousness, wrath and anger. Tribulation and distress, on every soul of man desiring evil, of the Jew first and also of a Gentile; but glory and honor and peace to everyone doing good, to the Jew first and also to a Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:6-11—translation).

The two terms “according to truth” (v. 2) and “according to deeds” (v. 6) harmonize in the unity of their meaning. “According to truth” is the subjective reality; “according to deeds” is the objective manifestation. What a person is determines what he does, but what he does never makes him what he is in character. Since fruit reveals the nature of a tree, judgment “according to truth” and judgment “according to deeds” indicate the inward and outward reality of the same person or persons.

As God’s judgment and man’s judgment are contrasted in Romans 2:1-5, good work and evil work are contrasted in verses 6-10. Negatively, good work is not merely knowing what is good or promising to do what is good. Positively, “good work” (*ergou agathou*, singular) in verse 7 is

the lifelong work that begins with salvation and continues until the Lord calls the Christian home. “Being persuaded of this very thing, that the One who began a good work [*ergon agathon*, singular] in you shall perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6—translation). A good work is according to God’s will: “For God is the One operating in you both to be willing and to be working for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13—translation).

The good work of the Christian must have the following ingredients: (1) The proper “motive” must be the glory of God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, and not to grieve the indwelling Holy Spirit: “...whatever you are doing, be doing for the purpose of [*eis*, accusative of purpose] God’s glory” (I Cor. 10:31—translation). “For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves slaves for the sake of [*dia*, accusative of relationship] Jesus” (II Cor. 4:5—translation). “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by [*en*, instrumental of agency] whom you were sealed for [*eis*, accusative of purpose] the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30 NASB). (2) The “manner” must be with great concern of heart: “The word is faithful, and concerning these things I am desiring you to speak confidently, in order that the ones having believed God may be concerned to be engaging themselves in good works. These things are good and profitable to men” (Titus 3:8—translation). (3) Its “essential element” is the love of God: “For the love of Christ is controlling [present active indicative of *sunecho*, which means to urge on, impel, or control] us...” (II Cor. 5:14—translation). The love of God “has been poured out [perfect passive indicative of *ekchunno*, which means we have been permanently endowed with God’s love] in our hearts through [*dia*, ablative of agency] the Holy Spirit who has been given [aorist passive participle of *didomi*, to give] to us” (Rom. 5:5—translation). The perfect passive and the aorist passive of the verb for poured out prove that the Holy Spirit and God’s love are permanent possessions of God’s elect; therefore, our hope does not disappoint (present active indicative of *kataischuno*, to disappoint, put to shame, or disgrace—Rom. 5:5a).

Perseverance in good work shall be rewarded. Patience in good work is not the feverish ambition which must see itself in the news and be congratulated in public meetings. Such ambition exhausts itself before the day of God’s righteous judgment; therefore, it receives its reward on earth. Concerning the Pharisees, Christ said, “...I am telling you, they have their reward” (Matt. 6:16—translation). Spasmodic effort wins no lasting honor in either time or eternity. The Christian life is the lifework of a willing mind and loving heart. That life has the mind of Christ and a heart overflowing with the love of God which has been shed abroad within by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Such a life motivated Paul to say, “Therefore I am enduring all things on account of the chosen ones, in order that they also may obtain the deliverance in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (II Tim. 2:10—translation).

The recipients of God’s grace are given a holy zeal for good works: “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself on behalf of us in order that He might set us free from all sin and cleanse for Himself a special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:13, 14—translation). Is the Christian as zealous for righteousness as he was for unrighteousness before God regenerated him? As a Pharisee, Saul was zealous for his own righteousness in his persecution of the assembly and for his ancestral traditions. (See Rom. 10:2; Phil. 3:6; Gal. 1:14.) As a Christian, Paul did not lose any of his zeal, but his zeal had been sanctified by grace. Thus, with zeal burning on the altar of his heart, Paul knew that his zeal was kindled, sustained, and attracted by the grace of the sovereign God. Since

zeal is acknowledged as good in the natural realm, is it to become less in the spiritual realm? Since zeal is right in any case, it is more justifiable in the realm of grace.

There are three classes of people who resist genuine Christian zeal:

1. THE UNGODLY—Festus said to Paul, “you are out of your mind [*maine*, present middle indicative of *mainomai*, to be out of one’s mind, insane or mad, or have no control over oneself]; your much learning is driving you [*peritrepei*, present active indicative of *peritrepo* to drive or bring around—made up of *peri*, around in the accusative case and *trepo*, to turn, alter, or change] to insanity [accusative singular of *mania*, meaning madness or insanity]” (Acts 26:24—translation). Truth stirs people in one of two ways—either for or against it, exemplified in their reaction to Christ (Mark 3:21), the apostles (Acts 2:13), and Christians in general (I Pet. 4:1-5).

2. THE RELIGIOUS HYPOCRITES—Hypocrites (*hupokrites*, an actor on the stage of life who is playing the role of what he is not in real life) are people pretending one thing while living something entirely different. Christ’s last words in the temple were condemnatory against the hypocrites (Matt. 23:13). The more moral and religious persons are without grace, the more ignorant they are of God, and the more they oppose God’s truth. Hypocrisy originates when obedience is not the outcome of the principle of grace. The further religionists are removed from the teaching of Scripture the more pharisaical they become. Furthermore, the more pharisaical people become the greater their hatred for truth and those who expose them by proclaiming it. Who crucified Jesus Christ? (See Acts 2:22, 23.)

3. ASSEMBLY MEMBERS WHO ARE LIVING OUT OF FELLOWSHIP—The Corinthians deserved Paul’s rebukes and corrections in his two Epistles to them. Unless the human element in the assembly is restrained, the spiritual life of the assembly will be greatly affected. Paul vindicated himself by distinguishing his impugners by making a distinction between the deceivers and the deceived. The weapons of deceivers are carnal, even though they mix in a little Scripture with their human eloquence, clever propaganda, charming personality, and personal attention. The deceived are gullible because they are lazy, untutored, and possessed with self-interest. Although in most cases the deceivers are false teachers, the Devil knows there are a great number of weak believers who will be easy prey for deception by his representatives. Many of the Corinthians became a serious burden to the apostle Paul. He said to them, “...I seek not your’s, but you....and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (II Cor. 12:14, 15). (Study II Cor. 9-12.)

The good worker has a future crown, because good work describes a life of character, which is the fruit of grace. “On one hand eternal life to the ones who because of perseverance in good work are seeking glory and honor and incorruptibility.... but glory and honor and peace to everyone doing good, to the Jew first and also to a Gentile” (Rom. 2:7, 10—translation). The future crown consists of glory, honor, and incorruptibility. The present active participle of *dzeteo*, “seeking,” of Romans 2:7 is the key to the proper understanding of the passage. The one seeking is the person who has been sought and found by the sovereign God; because in man’s natural condition, he does not seek God (Rom. 3:11). The Christian seeks glory (*doxa*, splendor, glory, or revealed presence of God) because it is a distinguishing characteristic of the eternal state. Although the grace of God in the believer is glorious, the sphere in which he lives in time

is anything but glorious. He seeks honor (*time*, honor, recognition, or place of honor—Rom. 2:10) which will be given by Christ rather than what is considered exaltation among men. The believer seeks incorruptibility (accusative singular of *aphtharsia*, imperishability—Rom. 2:7), which contrasts the perseverance of the eternal with that which is terminal.

After Paul's description of the Christian and his reward, he contrasted the evil worker and his reward: "On the other hand anger and wrath on the ones who out of selfish ambition are disobeying the truth but who are being obedient to unrighteousness, wrath and anger. Tribulation and distress on every soul of man desiring evil, of the Jew first and also of a Gentile" (Rom. 2:8, 9—translation). The Greek noun *eritheias* (selfish ambition) in Romans 2:8 means selfishness, selfish ambition, or strife (II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 1:16; 2:3; James 3:14, 16). The verb form is *eritheuomai*, which means to serve for hire, to serve a party, have a party spirit, wrangle, engage in strife, or oppose single-mindedness. But Christians are exhorted to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5); however, religionists who are possessed with selfish ambition oppose single-mindedness. The expression, "...anger and wrath on the ones who out of selfish ambition are disobeying the truth..." (Rom. 2:8—translation) is parallel with those who are of the circumcision. Persons possessed with selfish ambition are guilty of the heinous crime of disobedience to truth.

Those who are accomplishing evil shall be punished (Rom. 2:8, 9). Although God's wrath (punishment) is being revealed, there shall be an outburst of the execution of God's wrath. Since wrath is being stored up (Rom. 2:5), a sudden outburst of judgment shall come on the wicked, like a huge dam that has been allowing water to be stored until the appointed time for the dam to open and allow the stored water to descend on those below.

### **No Respect Of Persons In God's Judgment**

God's judgment is without respect of persons: "For there is no respect of persons [*prosolempsia*, a noun derived from the noun *proson*, meaning face, countenance, or appearance, and the verb *lambano*, meaning to receive; the compound word means respect of persons or partiality] with God. For as many as without law sinned, shall also without law perish; and as many as sinned in the sphere of the law shall be judged by means of the law; for not the hearers of the law are just before [in the sight of] God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:11-13—translation). The noun *prosolempsia*, used for respect of persons, is described in God's instruction to Samuel, a compassionate man, who was concerned about King Saul: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).

In Romans 2:11, the noun *prosolempsia* (respect of persons or partiality) is negated by the adverb *ou*, signifying that God's judgment is the same whether persons sin without law or in the sphere of the law. The expression "without law" applies to non-Jews who are without a written code of law; however, they are condemned because they do not live according to the general revelation in creation. On the other hand, the expression "in the sphere of the law" refers to the Jews who were given the law of Moses. None have ever been given license to sin. The Jews are

judged because the holy law is God's definite standard. Therefore, God's judgment, which is without respect of persons, will be a verdict of guilty on sinning mankind, whether non-Jews or Jews. Paul was not discussing how men are saved, but how they will be judged according to the light to which they have been exposed.

The statements "no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11) and "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) are taken out of context by persons who hate the Biblical doctrine of Divine election and God's providential government. Their defense against these Biblical facts is the quotation of the previously mentioned verses. They say if these subjects are true, God would be guilty of arbitrariness in election and would fail to treat people equally in His providential government. Pertaining to the doctrine of election, if God did not choose some, all would be lost because all are depraved. Concerning God's providential government, none can determine which rank or station of life supersedes the others, because all without exception enter this world in the same state of depravity.

FIRST—Election does not make God a respecter of persons. This is contrary to the false concept that the doctrine of election makes God guilty of injustice in that He gives to equal persons unequal things. One must understand that God is not bound to save any person, considering that He alone has absolute freedom. No one can go to law with God. He is His own law; therefore, there is no law above Himself. Since God is absolutely sovereign and free, man must view His choice of some as being for God's own pleasure. Therefore, election originated with God: "Having known [perfect active participle of *oida*], brethren, that you have been loved [perfect passive participle of *agapao*], by [*hupo*, ablative of agency] God, the choosing [*eklogen*, accusative feminine singular of *ekloge*, selection, election, or choosing] of you" (I Thess. 1:4—translation). This verse records the "act," the "Agent," and the "object." The moving cause of God's election is found only in "the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5), and it is called the "election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). God's decree of election is an act of sovereignty, not an act of justice.

God is not a respecter of persons in election because He did not choose men according to their character and works. Will any attempt to say God is unjust to choose some from the pit of depravity, when He would have been just had He destroyed all? God saw all people alike, and nothing but the good pleasure of His will balanced His choice. Justice always presupposes debt, but God could not be a debtor to man since man is dependent on God. Therefore, the decree of election is not a matter of right and wrong; it is God's free and undeserved favor to the unfavorable bound by a sinful nature. No person can ever understand the meaning of the grace of election until he is able by grace to see that he deserves God's eternal wrath. The worldly ambitious person says, "Blessed is the man who rises to great heights in the eyes of men." The sensualist says, "Blessed is the man who walks according to his own sensuous desires." But the Christian says, "How blessed is the one whom Thou dost choose, and bring near to Thee, To dwell in Thy courts..." (Ps. 65:4 NASB). The Greek verb for "chosen" in Ephesians 1:4 is in the aorist tense (completed action in past time), middle voice (sovereignly selected for Himself), and indicative mood (the mood of reality, which makes the choice an established fact). The compound verb *eklegomai* (or *eklego*) is derived from the preposition *ek*, out of, and the verb *lego*, to speak, say, or gather. In its inflected form, it means "chose once for all for Himself."

SECOND—Providence does not make God a respecter of persons. Concerning God’s providential government, no person is in a position to say which rank or station of life is superior to others. What appears to be partiality in providence, such as circumstances, condition of health, natural abilities, and external advantages cannot be justly determined in the light of the present. Man’s future alone can determine him happy or unhappy. Unhappiness evidences dependence on happenings to make one happy. Since man’s present condition is perpetually changing, even temporal happiness depends on more than externals. Such things as pain, persecution, disappointment, and hardship are often used to discipline God’s people. To the unsaved, they may constitute God’s punishment that is being constantly revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18).

Everything done in time was purposed in eternity. Therefore, the time for the execution of that purpose is brought about by the providence of God, signifying that providence is purpose in execution. The noun form for the word providence (*pronoia*) means provision, foresight, or care (Acts 24:2; Rom. 13:14). The verb form (*pronoieo*) means to have in mind, care for, or take care of (Rom. 12:17; II Cor. 8:21; I Tim. 5:8). Providence (Divine care or direction) may be considered in three major ways: (1) It may be without means or with means. (2) It may be extraordinary or ordinary, which means either by miraculous operations or by the common course of means. (3) It may be general or particular, which may concern the whole world in general or some in a particular way. For example, some things belong to men in general, such as, “He [God] is giving to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, appointing seasons and the boundaries of their dwelling having been designated.... For in Him we are living and being moved and are having our existence...” (Acts 17:25b, 26, 28—translation). On the other hand, other things belong to the elect in particular: “For to this purpose we are working hard and are contending with dangers, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Preserver of all men, above all of believers” (I Tim. 4:10—translation).

The sovereign God has power over everything He has created. He did not bring something into existence that He cannot control. Living in a day when God is humanized, blessings are materialized, and the gospel is socialized, Christians are a very small minority who appear to have the impossible goal of accomplishing what they preach. Christians, not religionists, encounter the same opposition as Nehemiah and the remnant of Jews when they undertook to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 4). God’s purpose was not obstructed in the case of Nehemiah, neither will it be hindered in His purpose for the “little flock” (Luke 12:32). Nehemiah’s opposition went from Sanballat’s grief (displeasure) to his anger, and then to his conspiracy (Neh. 2:10; 4:1-8).

God is ruling in the affairs of men. The greatest example of the controlling power of God is seen in the death of Jesus Christ. From all eternity God predestined every detail of that event. (See Acts 2:23; 4:28.) Christians espouse the truth and proclaim it for the purpose of reaching the elect. Although there are many devices in the hearts of men, the counsel of God shall stand; and His purpose shall be accomplished (Prov. 19:21; Is. 46:10). Those who oppose this Biblical fact argue, “If decrees do something to the event, freedom of action in producing the event is impossible.” The Lord does not change the quality but the current of the stream. It continues running according to its natural tendency, but it runs under God’s guidance and subservient to

His pleasure. Kings follow their own natural inclinations, but they are guided by God to fulfill His purpose.

Regarding Christ's death, one cannot deny that the time of His death was purposed in eternity (Rev. 13:8), and the execution of that purpose was brought about by the providence of God. No one laid hands on Jesus Christ as He taught in the temple for the reason that His hour had not come (John 8:20). There was an hour for each aspect of His life. In John 12:23, Christ said, "The hour has come [perfect active indicative of *erchomai*, to come] that the Son of man may be glorified" (translation). (See John 13:1; 17:1.) A Divine providence by which all things are held together (Col. 1:17), governed (Prov. 21:1), and directed is proved by the Being of God, His creation, and perfection.

Man has great difficulty explaining that God's providence cannot be excluded from man's sinful acts. Two things must be considered as undeniable facts, whether or not we are capable of reconciling them to our own satisfaction: (1) God is not the author of sin (James 1:13). (2) The providence of God has some concern with sinful acts. None can deny that God supports men in their being while they are sinning (Acts 17:28). He did not kill Ananias and Sapphira before they sinned (Acts 5:1-11). He kept Abimelech from committing adultery with Abraham's wife, Sarah, by appearing to him in a dream and saying, "Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife....for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen. 20:3b, 6b). However, in the case of David, God did not prevent him from committing adultery with Bathsheba, which was a sin against God (II Sam. 11:1-5; 12:13, 14; Ps. 51:4). God did not allow Laban to hurt Jacob (Gen. 31:7), but He did allow Shimei to curse David (II Sam. 16:5-14). Although David had nothing to do with the fall of King Saul, he did have something to do with the fall of Uria; therefore, he knew his chastening was from God. He said, "...let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David..." (II Sam. 16:10).

Every Christian has a Shimei who is such a trial to him that he wishes him removed. Nevertheless, he must not overlook the fact that God has a purpose in the Shimei in his life. While Shimei was David's offender, Alexander the coppersmith was Paul's offender (II Tim. 4:14). What is true of evil men is equally true of all our ominous surroundings and adverse circumstances, as we like to call them. These are not only appointed by God, but they are also kept and made to operate for the good of God's people. They are beyond our ability to understand, especially while experiencing trials. But having passed through them, we can look back with the assurance that the God of providence arranged them for our good. No Christian knows just what another believer needs, particularly his trying, searching, sifting, and sanctifying circumstances. God's providence is designed for Christian humility, submissiveness, contentment, detachment, denial of self, unearthliness, and conformity to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we should say with David, "Let Shimei curse because it is for my good."

If natural sense (the collective faculties of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching of man by which he perceives, discerns, realizes, or recognizes) alone were considered in reference to God's providential government, one would not give the Sovereign His rightful place in trying circumstances. Believing that God created man and subsequently assumed the position of a mere observer is a deistic concept of God. Such a person would not proceed beyond Shimei's cursing

David (II Sam. 16:5-14), Joseph's envying brothers afflicting him (Gen. 37:17-28; 45:1-15; 50:14-21), or the Jew's hatred manifested in the death of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:23). Rising above the natural sense of discernment is necessary but impossible apart from grace. The spiritual discernment of God-given faith says, "the LORD hath said unto him [Shimei], Curse David" (II Sam. 16:10); "But as for you, ye thought evil against me [Joseph]; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20); and "This man [Christ] was delivered according to the fixed purpose and prearrangement of God..." (Acts 2:23—translation). This manifests the difference between the natural man and the Christian.

God as governor of the universe and man sometimes punishes one sin with another sin. As it has been shown, Romans 1 teaches that the removal of God's restraint in time is a fearful punishment of sin. Plato made the statement that a license to sin is the greatest punishment of sin. He was correct when it comes to sin being punished by greater sins, but he was incorrect when he said it is the greatest punishment. As horrible as the description of sin is (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; II Thess. 2:11), the eternal punishment of hell is the greatest. Sometimes God overrules sin for good, as in the case of Adam's fall for his perfection in grace, Joseph's being sold into Egypt for the saving of many persons alive, and Christ's death for the salvation of the elect. "The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Ps. 145:17).

People who are unable to distinguish between the perfection of the Creator and the weakness of the creature, or the chief Agent and the instrument, adhere to the visible action without ascending to God who presides over all. "The King's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). Kings are ruled and overruled by God who is "higher than the highest" (Eccl. 5:8). Both politicians and religionists think God's heart is in their hands. Authorities of human government are not viewed in Scripture as having intelligence of a spiritual order. Scripture represents them as "beasts." Both Old and New Testaments use this word literally and symbolically. Daniel described governmental authorities as lions, bears, leopards, and the fourth beast as being so terrible that he had no name for him (Dan. 7). John reversed the order in Revelation 13. He called the fourth beast, too wicked to describe, dragon. All the beasts—governmental authorities—will give their authority to one government under the antichrist (Rev. 13). Nevertheless, this power will be controlled by God: "For God put [*edoken*, aorist active indicative of *didomi*, to put] it into their hearts to accomplish [*poiesai*, aorist active infinitive of *poieo*, to do, bring about, or accomplish] His purpose [*gnomen*, accusative feminine singular of *gnome*, purpose, intention, or decision], and to bring about [aorist active infinitive of *poieo*] one decision and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled [future passive indicative of *teleo*, to finish, complete, or fulfill]" (Rev. 17:17—translation). God works unseen in all the political and social changes of mankind. Therefore, instead of kings, presidents, and politicians preventing the accomplishment of God's purpose, they are unknowingly fulfilling it. Furthermore, religionists who say God can do nothing for them in a spiritual way until they choose to let Him, deny His sovereignty. Does the depraved will of man control God concerning man's physical life and sustenance? One who would say "I will live a long time" does not recognize that his breath is in God's hands.

In order to escape the dilemma of making God the cause of sin, one must have some understanding of depravity, grace, and confession. No Christian would ever say, "I did that sinful act because God worked in me to do that which is sinful." The Christian knows that apart from



God's grace he is nothing and deserves nothing. Therefore, rather than trying to resolve the problem which the natural person has with providence and sin by way of concurrence, he respects the boundaries God has established for his thinking. (See Deut. 29:29.) Scripture never presents providence in its relation to sin by way of argument, but always in a historical setting of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. God-given faith does not flee from responsibility; furthermore, it explains sin as coming from man's depraved heart.

God's providential government can be trusted, because it is executed according to His eternal purpose. As important as prayer is in the life of a Christian, it can never derange the economy of providence. Prayer must come through the discipline of learning. An informed person who prays seeks strength to meet and not change facts. Much so-called prayer seeks to drag God on man's side; thus, it is man-centered rather than God-centered. Prayer is power to submit our lives to the will of God. Prayer will not change God's purpose concerning who shall be saved or when they will be saved. God's providence does assure us that the elect will be preserved until they are regenerated. (See Jude 1.)

Although the elect fell in time in our representative human head, Adam, we did not fall in eternity out of our covenant Head, Jesus Christ. Therefore, having been permanently loved and kept by the sovereign God, all the elect are assured of being effectually called at God's appointed time. The same God who permanently loved and kept the elect for salvation is able to keep the effectually called elect from falling and to make us stand in the presence of Him without blemish in the sphere of eternal joy. This is the good side of providence, and it is wonderfully portrayed against the apostate condition which is also under the control of providence (Jude 24, 25).

God's providence is not appointed as a guide for one's life. It should drive us to the word of God. Christians must not murmur against providence. We discover the will of God and our duty under dark and doubtful providence by going to the word of God. Providence in itself is no standard for duty. It may present occasion for sinning, as in the case of Jonah. Any testimony of providence contrary to God's revealed will must not be accepted. Providence does not justify moral evil. Every sinner loves the good providence of God, but Christians love the God of providence. As mercies are fuel to a sinner's lust, they are fuel to maintain a Christian's love and fidelity to God.

THIRD—God's righteousness in judgment proves He is not a respecter of persons. Neither Divine election nor providential government makes God guilty of partiality, as He is charged by the enemies of these two Biblical doctrines. God's judgment is without respect of persons. Romans 2:11 is connected with its preceding and succeeding verses. The conjunction "For" (*gar*) shows that "no respect of persons with God" is associated with the preceding verses. The noun *prosopolempsia* of Romans 2:11, which means respect of persons or partiality, is negated by the adverb *ou*; therefore, no one can accuse God of being unjust in view of the fact that He is righteous in His judgments: "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe" (Deut. 10:17 NASB).

God, whose understanding is infinite (Ps. 147:5), cannot be bribed because everything past, present, and future is eternally known to Him. There is no succession in His knowledge. The

correct way to speak of the God of gods and Lord of lords is, “He is.” One might speak of created man as having been, is, and shall be; he is not now what he was; and he shall not be what he is at the present. However, God is the same now that He was, and He shall be the same as He is now (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17).

Eternity has been defined as duration without beginning or ending and present without past or future. However, “duration” is not a good term on account of it signifies the length of time something continues to exist. Constancy, which means perpetual, ceaseless, permanent, or uninterrupted, is the better word. Eternity is not duration; it is ceaseless. Furthermore, eternal signifies more than pretemporal. The terms pretemporal, cotemporal, and posttemporal are expressions used to describe past, present, and future with reference to time. Such expressions are necessary for creatures of time, but they cannot be used with reference to God. That which is temporal to us, whether past, present, or future, is a present fact to the eternal God. All things with respect to God have a known and a real existence; however, since there is no time with God, both are simultaneous to Him. Although future things in time do not coexist with God, He coexists with them: “...I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he” (Is. 41:4).

The eternal God with infinite understanding knows man’s thoughts before their existence. David said, “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off [a Hebrew adjective meaning far or remote]” (Ps. 139:1, 2). The Lord said to Moses concerning Israel, “...I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear” (Deut. 31:21). Greatness must be ascribed to the God of gods and Lord of lords because He eternally knows every man through and through: “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3). Conclusively, God who knows man through and through cannot be bribed.

The Hebrew word *shohad* means bribe, gratuity, or inducement. Prohibitions concerning the reception of bribes are found in the Pentateuch: “And you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just” (Ex. 23:8 NASB). Under the old economy, the Jewish judges had a duty as serious as that of the priests. Since the judges must make judgment on the basis of God’s standard, their judgment would be God’s judgment. Judges must be (1) impartial—“You shall not pervert the justice...” (Ex. 23:6 NASB), (2) judicious—“Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous [capital punishment]...” (Ex. 23:7 NASB), and (3) incorrupt—“And you shall not take a bribe...” (Ex. 23:8 NASB).

A bribe is something given or promised as illicit payment for information that would be advantageous to the person offering the payment. People on Wall Street could give many examples of bribes in the Stock Market business. No doubt bribes are common today, but the commonality of a crime does not make it right. The same portion of Scripture (Ex. 23:1-9) warns against following the multitudes, whether irreligious or religious: “You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice” (Ex. 23:2 NASB). This verse assumes that the multitude practices evil. The honest person, because of his own innate tendencies to evil, knows this is factual. Listen to Isaiah, “Your rulers are rebels, And companions of thieves; Everyone loves a bribe, and chases

after rewards...” (Is. 1:23 NASB). “Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right” (Is. 5:23 NASB). Listen to Micah: “Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us” (Micah 3:11 NASB).

Disregard for Biblical principles leads to fraud and violence, thus indicating that if the price is right a bribe can lead to violence. “Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person...” (Deut. 27:25 NASB). David said, “O LORD, I love the habitation of Thy house, And the place where Thy glory dwells. Do not take my soul away along with sinners, Nor my life with men of bloodshed, In whose hands is a wicked scheme, And whose right hand is full of bribes” (Ps. 26:8-10 NASB). Ezekiel said to Jerusalem, “In you they [rulers of Israel] have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me, declares the Lord God” (Ezek. 22:12 NASB). (See I Sam. 8:3; I Kings 15:19; II Kings 16:8.)

As Saul bribed others to seek the life of David, the Jews of the greater David’s time bribed one of His own disciples to betray the Son of God into their hands. Those who have no knowledge of depravity think it strange that personified goodness (Jesus Christ) could be treated by men in such a manner. Religionists who understand neither depravity nor personified goodness think that virtue needs only to be presented in its true colors in order to be loved by all at once. The thought that all men would love embodied righteousness is false. Virtue was embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ; but all men did not, do not, and will not love Him. The Son of God was despised and rejected by men. Following His rejection, wicked men led Embodied Godliness to Calvary, where they crucified the Son of God between two thieves.

The absolutely righteous Lord “spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, For I the LORD your God am holy.... You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly” (Lev. 19:1, 2, 15 NASB). When it comes to judging others, Christians must never consider what others have done or are doing in similar conditions. We must begin with serious self-judgment, and from there judge on the basis of Scripture, regardless of our closeness to or distance from the ones being judged. Furthermore, we must not be swayed by rank, wealth, influence, or the opinions of others. The power of the court of Areopagus at Athens was great. The custom of the court was to make its judgments only at night without light. The reason given for this practice was that the members of the court might not be prejudiced for or against the accused by seeing his countenance and gestures. Truth alone was to be regarded, and no attempt to distort it so as to lose truth or objectivity must be allowed. Since that was the practice in the court of Areopagus, what about the civil, self, and assembly courts of our day?

“Respect of persons” [*prosopolempsia*, partiality or favoritism] means to look with favor on some with regard to their external privileges without any concern for their internal character. This is vividly demonstrated in the realms of society, politics, and religion. Immoral and heretical things are overlooked in the lives of many for personal, political, and religious advantage. Jude warned against this, “These are murmurers complainers, conducting themselves according to their own lusts, and their mouth is speaking boastful things, having men’s persons

in admiration for the sake of advantage” (Jude 16—translation). James condemned looking with favor on some with respect to their external privileges (James 2:1-9). The wealthy man must not be given attention above the poor man, but this does not mean that the indolent person is to be regarded the same way as the industrious person. Solomon mentioned the sluggard (*atsel*, sluggard, slothful, or indolent) six times in the book of Proverbs (6:6, 9; 10:26; 13:4; 20:4; 26:16). “Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise” (Prov. 6:6 NASB). The ant could be called a little preacher with a great message of foresight, diligence, and industry. The ant’s foresight motivates its diligence in providing food for the coming winter. “How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?” (Prov. 6:9 NASB). Was not man created with more understanding than the lower creatures? “The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing. But the soul of the diligent is made fat” (13:4 NASB).

All respect of persons is not sinful. If it were, there would be no place for authority in either civil government or the assemblies of Christ. The following are some ways in which respect of persons is not sinful: (1) There is holy respect of persons with God: “And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect [*shaa*, the basic idea is to look with interest, gaze at, inspect, or have respect or regard for] unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect...” (Gen. 4:4, 5). Abel’s person was accepted prior to his offering, thus teaching that the person must be regarded before his service. Consequently, salvation does not result from works, but good works are the fruit of the one having been created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). (2) There is a justifiable respect of persons due to their age (I Tim. 5:1). (3) Respect is due to those in a God-appointed office in civil government (Rom. 13:1-7). While one may bow to the office of king, president, etc., he is not obligated to bow to the person in that office who acts contrary to God’s Biblical principles. (4) Respect is due men of God for their God-appointed office in the local assemblies of Christ (I Tim. 3; 4). However, Christians are obligated to follow God-appointed leaders only as they follow the Lord. (See I Cor. 11:1; II Thess. 3:7.) Although salvation is common to all believers (Jude 3), we are not equal in gifts and calling (I Cor. 12:4-11, 27-30). The inequality in gifts and calling must be respected because God Himself makes one to differ from another.

### **All Secrets Revealed In God’s Judgment**

God’s judgment reveals all secrets: “For as many as without law sinned, shall also without law perish; and as many as sinned in the sphere of the law shall be judged by means of the law; for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For whenever non-Jews who do not have law do by nature things of the law, these having not the law are a law to themselves; who are showing the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with their reasonings accusing or even excusing among themselves, on the day when God judges the hidden things of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:12-16—translation).

The truth that God’s sovereignty does not eliminate man’s responsibility is taught in verses 12-14. Our studies in chapter 1 have proved that to be true. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility have been called one of the antinomies of Scripture. This word is frequently used, especially when a person comes face to face with two things that are difficult to harmonize.

Theologians of the past used it with reference to many passages of Scripture. In theology, it is applied to apparently conflicting doctrines concerning the same subject. There is no Greek word for antinomy. It is an English word that has been incorporated to try to explain some things that human beings do not have the ability to comprehend. Since the limitations of the human mind render it impossible to approach the truth of two apparently contradictory ideas, some say the truth of both is capable of equal demonstration. However, two diametrically opposed opinions cannot be equally demonstrated. Man does not have a free will. His will is enslaved. Therefore, free will and free grace cannot be equally demonstrated.

Antinomy is described in a dictionary as a contradiction between two equally logical conclusions. It is defined in another dictionary as opposition between one law, principle, rule, etc., and another law, principle, or rule. In philosophy, it is said to be a contradiction between two statements, both attained by seemingly correct reasoning. Antinomy and paradox are distinct. Antinomy is incomprehensible, whereas paradox is comprehensible. The following are some so-called contradictions appearing in Scripture: (1) God is absolutely sovereign, and man is a responsible being. (2) The Divine and the human are in both the living Word and the written word. In the Divine *logos*, the Son of God, are the human and Divine natures; and in the giving of Scripture, are the human element and Divine inspiration. (3) Fallible men were inspired to write the infallible word. (4) There is the regular function of natural laws, the laws of nature, and the occasional occurrence of miraculous events in nature's ordered system. (5) Temporal sin committed in time will result in eternal punishment. (6) Election is Divine, and elected sinners exercise individual faith.

The difference between centrifugal and centripetal forces, two opposing things, illustrates an antinomy as far as our understanding is concerned. They appear contradictory. Centrifugal force directs power from the center, but centripetal force directs power toward the center. The supposed contradiction between them keeps the planets, including the earth, in space in their proper orbits. Therefore, the forces are complimentary and contribute to harmonious operation of the universe itself. This is God's doing. Who will argue about so-called contrarities? Only our lack of understanding would cause us to call them antinomies. Laziness in the study of God's word prompts some Christians to label certain truths as antinomies as an alibi. They claim some subjects are so deep they cannot understand them, and they do not consider what God has said. One who desires to know truth will search to find the truth. An unsaved person does not seek to know more about God. The only person who seeks God is one who has been sought and found by God and given grace. We must not learn the term antinomy as an excuse for lack of studying God's word and doing His will.

There is an element of truth in the statement that antinomies of Scripture enable children of God to guard against disturbance over our inability to reconcile all the doctrines of Holy Scripture with one another. But we need to use it with caution. There is no disharmony between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility; but in order to understand them, we must realize that God is in control of everything. We must also know that God created man upright, but man fell; nevertheless, God is not responsible for his fall. Furthermore, God has the right to command man to do what he is unable to do. Hence, there is no contradiction.

The Creator is not restricted to limitations. God does not answer all questions that curious minds might raise. We are limited in our ability to fully comprehend God's infinite mind, but we can understand what He wants us to know. Perhaps He never intended that we understand the things we do not understand, but we lay hold of or apprehend what we do not comprehend. Christians are taught to humbly trust God's veracity. If we could explain everything, we would not trust God's veracity. We understand by faith things that cannot be understood apart from God-given faith.

The Creator is unrestricted by the creatures' limitations. Creatures must wait for the solution to many mysteries in Scripture and providence. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). God has revealed all to which He intends that we be subjected. If He revealed more, we could not know anything about it. The things of His will that are revealed belong to us. If you say the assembly is local and it is also universal, you speak of two hemispheres of the sphere. Man should avoid philosophical system's explanation of the things of God. They cannot be explained by carnal minds. Therefore, one must rely on the Spirit of God to interpret Scripture.

A consideration of God's absolute sovereignty and man's responsibility leads Christians to vital interest in God's eternal purpose—singular. Technically, God has a purpose, a decree; but there are many facets to God's decree. God has a plan for the ages, and He causes all things to move toward one goal. He governs the actions of men and they subserve His purpose in that goal. Therefore, God is sovereign. Nothing takes Him by surprise. Although the Lord's temporary dispensations are sometimes altered, His eternal purpose never changes. It is fulfilled according to His design. God alone has the right to determine individuals and nations (Acts 17:26). God's right to impose law on mankind rises from His absolute sovereignty. Man's duty to observe that law flows from his responsibility as a creature created by the sovereign God. Creatures owe their allegiance and honor to God. Every knee shall bow in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ to acknowledge His Lordship (Phil. 2:5-11).

With God's purpose in view, adversity and prosperity, which are apparently contradictory, exist side by side. "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider..." (Eccl. 7:14). Both are required. God also has set the one over against the other to the end that man should find nothing after him. God's purpose is executed in all adverse and prosperous things. Spiritual minds alone can comprehend God's turning men's sin to His glory. Men sin; but God overrules sin, even the sins of men, for His own glory. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him. God overruled Joseph's brethren's intended evil for their own personal good. He overruled in the death of Jesus Christ for the good of His people. Man's wrongdoing is not allowed to hinder God's purpose. God overrules the wickedness of men. God's temporary dispensations, many of which are recorded in Scripture, are sometimes altered. His promised blessings or punishments are withheld suitable to the attitude of those with whom He deals in His providence. The people of Ninevah repented (Jonah 3:10). God gives the spirit of penitence, which is godly sorrow, and man repents. Repentance is the gift of God. The word for repentance in the Old Testament is return. God first turns us, and then we return. In God's act of saving us, we are passive. God acts and we react.

Old Testament history demonstrates God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. The heart of Pharaoh, who held the children of Israel in Egyptian bondage, was hardened. God hardened his heart, and he hardened his own heart. God hardened his heart by exposing him to the truth and forcing him to an issue. God did not infuse hardness in Pharaoh's heart. He only lifted His restraint and allowed him do what his hard heart desired. Therefore, he hardened his own heart. God hardens men's hearts today by providentially subjecting them to the word of God. As men hear and fail to obey, they harden their own hearts. God does not infuse the hardness. He simply leaves men to the depravity of their own human hearts. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are revealed in the introduction of sin into the human race. God is not the author of sin, but one cannot possibly imagine sin out of all relation to God. God could have prevented sin's appearance had He chosen to do so, but He did not purpose to do so.

Great controversy exists over free will and free grace, which is another so-called antinomy. Free will, as it is believed by the majority, will drive people to methods. For this reason most so-called worship services are designed to affect the emotional part of man. Religionists go from one method to another. Denominationally trained men today are concerned about what they can use and what they can do to get the most people. They believe salvation is dependent on the free will of man, so they must do something to persuade him to exercise his will. If one gimmick does not work, they try another. In contrast to free will, which drives people from one method to another, free grace drives people to the word of God; and they are satisfied, knowing that God has the answer. The Divine order has always been and always will be the mind, the emotions, and then the will. Anyone who tries to reach only the will or only the emotional nature is in error. The true method is to give an exposition of Scripture to reach through the declaration of truth the people God has regenerated.

God is always the overflowing fountain. Man is always needy and must wait to drink of God's fountain. Between man's natural ability and his spiritual inability rests his responsibility. That is a good statement, but it deserves explanation. Man's natural ability is that with which he comes into the world. As a result of the fall, man is spiritually unable to do anything of a spiritual nature. Therefore, between his natural ability and his spiritual inability, he is still a responsible individual. A man chained in a prison cell is physically unable to walk. However, his inability is attributable to the one who chained him. Nevertheless, his will is not changed. The body but not the will may be chained. His will, as far as he is concerned, remains free. Hence, man is spiritually incapable of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. He has neither ability nor will to exercise faith in Christ. He does not have the will to believe because he does not have grace. Since his will is depraved, he acts according to his corrupt nature. He cannot naturally obey the gospel, which is required for salvation. He does not naturally act from foreign but from inward influence. Man still has his faculties, but they are depraved. They are motivated by iniquitous things. Only the grace of God can change that motivation. He is natural and has natural ability, but he has no spiritual ability to do spiritual things. Nevertheless, he is responsible because God is the author of neither his fall nor his sin. God created man upright (Eccl. 7:29).

There is no contradiction between the first and last parts of John 6:63, which many claim is another antinomy: "The Spirit is the one making alive, the flesh profits nothing; the words [*hrema*, which refers more to the spoken message than just to the written message] which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (translation). Those who believe this is an antinomy say the

spoken word is spirit and life. Does the word itself give life? Those who believe in gospel regeneration answer in the affirmative. When Jesus Christ was here, He spoke. Was everyone who heard Him speak made alive? Only the ones who understand Christ's words in a spiritual sense will find them living in operation. This was demonstrated by the Thessalonian Christians. When the gospel came to them, it did not come in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, which is a living operation (I Thess. 1:5). Efficacious grace is taught in John 6:63. The first part of the text affirms that the Spirit is the One making alive. In giving us life, He gives us ability to hear the words given. Hence, the Holy Spirit having made one alive in Jesus Christ also makes him sensitive to the living and continuing word of God (I Pet. 1:18-23). The latter part of the text in John 6:63 is not discussing regeneration. This word becomes the instrument of the assurance of salvation; it does not quicken.

There is a realm of truth beyond the comprehension of man's natural powers. We could not understand these things apart from the Holy Spirit. But this reality is never at the expense of the grammatical, historical account of Holy Scripture. As the artist can see and the musician can hear things many could never see or hear, Christians understand things that non-Christians can never see or understand. The Spirit of God does more than work through the sanctified eye and ear gate. He operates through the gift of faith.

God's judgment reveals all hidden things: "...all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). God knows the thoughts of every person, not only of the Jews but also of humanity in general. He will bring to light all things of saints and sinners among Jews and Gentiles. Both saved and lost will be judged, but not at the same time. In Romans 2:12-16, the apostle divided mankind into two classes—Jews and non-Jews. In I Corinthians 10:32, He divided them into three classes—Jews, non-Jews, and the assembly Jesus Christ is continuing to build in the world today.

Neither the law within nor the law without was given for the purpose of justification. However, both do condemn men. That is the purpose of the law. The law was given that men might measure themselves thereby. It measures men but never provides the means of justification before God. God's judgment, which is without partiality (Rom. 2:11), pronounces the verdict of guilty: "For as many as without law sinned, shall also without law perish; and as many as sinned in the sphere of the law shall be judged by means of the law" (v. 12—translation). Those without law who do not heed their internal witness shall perish. Those within the sphere of the law who do not respect the external witness of the written law shall be condemned. This verse teaches the way men shall be judged, not the way they shall be saved. Paul was not discussing deliverance by the grace of God in this portion of Scripture. Gentiles who are without an external standard shall perish without law, and Jews who have the external standard of the law shall be condemned by that standard. But all are condemned. All men will be judged according to the light to which they have been exposed, whether they sin within or without the sphere of the law: "For this reason through one man sin entered into the world [world of mankind], and death by sin, so also death passed on all men, inasmuch as all sinned; for until law sin was in the world, but sin is not charged to one's account when there is no law; but death reigned from Adam to Moses even on the ones not having sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a type of the One coming" (Rom. 5:12-14—translation).



Although men lived, sinned, and died before Moses, their dying proved they were responsible individuals. The inner law judged every man from Adam to Moses. Although non-Jews are without the written form of the law, they are responsible for their sins: “Because that which is known of God is evident in them; for God manifested it to them. For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are being clearly seen being understood by the things made, both his eternal power and deity, with the result that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:19, 20—translation). Law within acquaints men with the knowledge that there is a Creator. Since the Godhead of God is revealed in creation, every man is without excuse before God.

“In the sphere of the law” (Rom. 2:12) refers to the Jews who had the external law. They heard it read but made no application of it: “for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13—translation). The law’s function is to judge, not justify. It was given for the purpose of judging. Since the Jews were subjected to the reading of the law but failed to practice what they heard, they were condemned by the law. The law was given to expose us and show us what we must have in order to pass out of death into everlasting life. It reveals to us our need of deliverance by grace. Regeneration alone can impart the principle of life to an individual.

Neither possession of the law nor having heard it read or taught will give safety in the day of God’s judgment. There are three kinds of hearers: (1) Some hear the word but do not understand it. The law is spiritual, holy, and good (Rom. 7:12). It is the expression of the holy character of God. That is why we are condemned when we look at ourselves in the light of God’s law which cannot deliver. Men cannot understand the law when it is heard because it is spiritual and must be spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:14). (2) Some hear but do not put into practice what they hear. (3) Others hear and do the things they hear. Hence, there are three types of people.

The law shows the need of salvation but does not provide it. The law was never given as a means of the new birth. It is the means by which man must measure himself before God. It condemns and shows man that his need is deliverance by God’s grace. The Jews were measured by law and were taught enough to know their need, but they were saved by sacrifice. Their salvation by sacrifice was before the law was given to them. This Biblical order is revealed in the book of Exodus. Although Jesus Christ had not yet offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, His sacrifice was typified by all the Old Testament sacrifices on the altar. The Jews were not saved by those sacrifices but by the anticipated sacrifice—singular—of Jesus Christ to which all the sacrifices pointed (Heb. 10:1-14). Hence, they were saved by faith in the coming Christ, the one perfect sacrifice for sin.

Since the theme of Romans is grace-righteousness, not law-righteousness, the statement, “for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13), should not be confusing. The thesis of Romans is righteousness provided by God. It is first imputed and then imparted. Imputation is legal. Impartation is when the imputed righteousness is actually imparted in the individual. Paul distinguished grace-righteousness from law-righteousness. The Jews professed righteousness but did not possess righteousness. They misconstrued the purpose of the law (Gal. 3). Grace-righteousness was imparted in Paul by the Lord; and in grace-righteousness, he counted all he had gained under law for righteousness as nothing but refuse that he might stand in Christ, not having his own righteousness but the

righteousness that was first imputed to him and then imparted in him by God's grace in time (Phil. 3:4-10). Grace-righteousness produces practical holiness—faith, love, obedience, and all dispositions of the nature of grace. Law demands obedience, but no one can obey until he has the life by which he can obey.

The non-Jews “are showing the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with their reasonings accusing or even excusing among themselves” (Rom. 2: 15—translation). The Greek word for conscience (v. 15) is a present active participle of the compound word *summartureo*. It refers to moral consciousness. The noun for conscience, *suneidesis*, comes from the compound verb *sunoido*. The prefix means with or together; and *oida* means to see, be sure, or understand. In verse 15, the verb *martureo*, which means to testify or bear witness, is prefixed by *sun* (which is *sum*, in this instance) and means with. Hence, the noun “conscience” and the verb “bear witness” show that both bear a joint witness. The indwelling work of the law and conscience bear the same testimony, whether it is a written or an unwritten law. The reciprocal pronoun “their,” *allelon* (v. 15), meaning one another or each other, reveals the interaction of two witnesses—the law written in the heart, or the external law, and the conscience—that either accuse or defend. Their reasonings (*logismon*, genitive plural of *logismos*, reasoning or argument) accuse (present active participle of *kategoreo*, made up of *kata*, down, and *goreo*, a verbal attack; it means to speak against) or defend (present middle participle of *apologeomai*, made up of *apo*, from, and *logos*, defend oneself against a charge or make a defense) each other (v. 15).

Conscience performs partnership action with the instruction an individual has received. No man discerns rightness and wrongness by conscience alone. His intellect sees agreement or disagreement of conduct with the rule of life either written or unwritten. Information fed into the computer of the mind is processed, and the process either accuses or defends. Conscience experiences pain or pleasure in itself disagreeably or agreeably. Agreement of conscience with the mind produces pleasure. Disagreement of conscience with the mind causes pain, unless the conscience is seared.

Before an act is committed, conscience serves as a tutor to advise and teach according to the light that is possessed. This is the reason Paul lived in good conscience before God even before he was regenerated. He was living according to the light he possessed. Properly instructed conscience leads one to consider before he acts. Subsequent to the act, conscience is a judge. There is no escape from it. A fundamentally dishonest man might make a mistake about the truth or falsity of a statement made several years before, but a fundamentally honest man would not make such a mistake. A dishonest man distorts facts and shapes them to his own purpose. He has nothing but memory on which to rely, and his memory is faulty. Dishonest persons distort and pervert things for personal advantage. However, an honest man relies on truth which is always the same. The Christian loves truth. He seeks to live and speak truth. Although he may tell a lie, an indelible impression is made on his conscience so that he cannot forget. His memory will remind him of it as long as he lives. The memory of one who dies in his sins will go with him throughout eternity. People in heathen countries where they have never been exposed to the written law of God intuitively know that murder, adultery, theft, etc., are evil. After an act of sin is committed, the conscience that tutored and advised becomes the source of condemnation to the

one without a seared conscience. Conscience becomes one's judge, and one cannot perjure his conscience.

Human conscience is not a member of the body which will return with the members of the body to the dust of the earth. It is a member of the soul which will never return to dust. As the conscience is now an accuser or a defender within, so it will be throughout eternity. Cain killed Abel, and his conscience was affected so that he never forgot that he murdered his brother. Abel's blood cried out to him. Judas' guilty conscience caused him to hang himself. Felix's guilty conscience caused him to tremble before Paul's preaching. The Bible abounds with such illustrations. Man's condemning conscience will condemn him throughout eternity if he dies in his sins.

All secrets shall be revealed: "For nothing is hidden, except that it may be revealed; nor became concealed, but that it may come into light" (Mark 4:22—translation). Men may hide things from one another, but nothing is hidden from God. The time in which men sin is the hour of darkness. When the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders came to take Jesus Christ for crucifixion, He said, "this is your hour [*hora*], and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53b). The word *hora* in this verse means the time when something took place, is taking place, or shall take place. As there is an hour for sinning, there shall be a day for judging (Rom. 2:16). "I am telling you that it shall be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matt. 10:15—translation). As heinous as the sin of sodomy is, it is not as heinous as the rejection of the word of the living God. Homosexuality is a sin against God's moral law. Rejection of God's message is commensurate with rejection of the Person of Jesus Christ Himself, and there is nothing worse.

Since the best have the worst of it now in this world, there will be a judgment that will set things right in order that the best may enjoy the best throughout eternity. This judgment does not presently take place because God is longsuffering, not willing that any of His own should perish but that they come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9).

Hidden things are the best evidences of what man is either positionally or conditionally. What we are publicly is not what we are, but what we are when we are alone evidences what we are. God's knowing what we are thinking is the best evidence of what we really are. That is true of the Christian conditionally, and it is true of the nonbeliever positionally. What we cannot be absolutely sure about is our thoughts, but God knows. Should someone ask you to give a brief history of your life, would you give a true history, or would it be one that would manifest two different persons. Would you tell it like it is, or would you embellish it to sound like you want to be heard. We are what we are before God, and we should want to be before others what we are before God.

### **God's Just Judgment On Hypocrisy**

God's judgment is just (Rom. 2:17-3:8). His judgment of hypocrisy is just (Rom. 2:17-24). The religious Jews were hypocrites judging others, but they were not judging themselves: "Therefore O man, you are without excuse, everyone who is judging; for that in which you are judging

another, you are passing judgment on yourself; for you who judge practice the same things” (Rom. 2:1—translation).

One is hypocritical to judge another prior to judging himself. Although the word “Jew” in Romans 2:17 is singular, Paul was addressing all Jews. The word is used generically. The hypocritical Jews called themselves Jews, comforted themselves in the sphere of the law, and bragged for themselves in God. Their boasting was national assent. Theirs was mechanical reliance in God. Their boasting may be compared with someone boasting of his denominational ties. People hide behind names, creeds, etc., and call themselves this or that when there is no reality.

These hypocritical Jews had permanently convinced themselves to be guides of the blind, a light of the ones in darkness (Rom. 2:19). But they based their conviction on what they themselves had done and not on what God had done for them. Such persons are unteachable. They were instructors of foolish ones, teachers of babies, having the form of knowledge and of the truth in the sphere of the law (Rom. 2:20). The word for “form” in this verse is from *morphosis*. It is used only twice in the New Testament. The other place is II Timothy 3:5—“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof....” Hence, their knowledge of the truth in the sphere of the law was in appearance only. In contrast, the regenerated person is not satisfied without hearing the revealed truth that causes him to become established in the faith.

This religious nation tried to get others not to do as they did but to do what they said. They taught others but did not teach themselves. They preached that others should not steal but did not know they were stealing in many ways. The same was true of adultery and idolatry (Rom. 2:21, 22). They should have abhorred the violation of anything sacred. Paul then returned to the way he began his condemnation of these pietists in verse 17. While they were boasting in the sphere of the law, they were dishonoring God through the transgression of the law, because the name of God was blasphemed among the non-Jews through them, as it has been written (Rom. 2:23, 24).

### **God’s Just Judgment On Religious Rites**

God’s judgment against religious rites is just (Rom. 2:25-29). The religious rite of circumcision availed the Jews nothing because they were transgressors of the law (v. 25). Circumcision was a seal: “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised...” (Rom. 4:11). However, a seal or sign is of no consequence when it has been removed from that which it certifies. The Jews were clinging to the symbol of circumcision in the flesh while knowing nothing about what circumcision symbolized. Likewise, many assembly members claim they have been baptized, are members of a certain denomination, were raised in a certain faith, etc. However, all these things are worthless without one’s having first died with Christ and having been made to walk in newness of life.

Paul spoke hypothetically of the non-Jews by using a subjunctive verb, “may keep” (*phulasse*, present active subjunctive of *phulasso*), with a third class condition conjunction, “if” (*ean*): “Therefore if the uncircumcision may keep the requirements of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be regarded for circumcision?” (Rom. 2:26—translation). The answer to Romans

2:25-26 pertaining to judgment of those practicing religious rites without having been regenerated is recorded in verse 27—“And shall not the uncircumcision by nature, the one carrying out the law, judge you, the one who through the letter and circumcision is a transgressor of the law?” (translation).

The real Jew is described in Romans 2:28-29—“For the Jew is not one in outward appearance, neither is circumcision outward in the flesh; but the Jew is one in his inmost being, and circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter, whose praise is not out of men but out of God” (translation). He is one who has been circumcised in his heart and not merely in his flesh. Paul gave a Divine commentary on this in Galatians 6:12-15—“As many as are desiring to make good showing in the flesh, they are insisting you to be circumcised, only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For the ones being circumcised are not keeping the law themselves, but they are desiring you to be being circumcised in order that they may glory in your flesh. But may it not happen for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (translation). As the real Jew was not one who was merely outwardly circumcised, the real Christian is not the one who has been baptized as an outward sign; but he is the one who has been quickened by the Holy Spirit of God, thus having been made a new creation in Christ Jesus. The real Jew is described in Romans 9:4-8. There are Jews according to the flesh, and there are Jews according to the Spirit—those who have been regenerated (Rom. 11).

## GOD'S JUST JUDGMENT ON DEPRAVED JEWS AND GENTILES

- Romans 3:1-18

Beginning with Romans 3, Paul asked two questions but discussed one of them: “What then is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the profit of the circumcision? Much in every way. For in the first place because they were entrusted with the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:1, 2—translation). God has given us His written revelation through the Jews, for which we shall be eternally grateful. The incarnate Word is the Christian’s power. The written word is the believer’s authority. To question Scripture as being God’s word is a denial of authority. The incarnate Word has declared the Father in His word (John 1:18). He told the mind of God. The incarnate Word declared the power of God in His works, the love of God in His compassion, the grace of God in His actions, the holiness of God in His character, the righteousness of God in His death, and the energy of God in His resurrection. The altitude of Scripture shows its Divine origin. Who can scale the heights of this mountain? The blessings show its Divine bounty. Its claims speak of Divine authority. Its diction declares its Divine Speaker. Its freshness tells out its Divine Author. Its order speaks of a Divine plan. Its questions speak of the Divine Convictor. Its wisdom displays the Divine Teacher.

Every time the expression “it is written” is found, it is perfect active indicative of *grapho*, signifying that it stands permanently written. Pertaining to sin, it stands permanently written that none is righteous (Rom. 3:10). Pertaining to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it stands permanently written that He came to do the Father’s will (Heb. 10:7). Pertaining to salvation, it stands permanently written that those bringing the gospel of peace are blessed (Rom. 10:15). Pertaining to sanctification, it stands permanently written that Christians should be holy (I Pet. 1:16). Pertaining to judgment, it stands permanently written that God will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent (I Cor. 1:19).

The attitude of both the Jews and the believers toward the word of God should be to view it with meekness (James 1:21), let it dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16), keep it tenaciously by guarding it with our lives (John 17:6), continue in it untiringly (John 8:31), live it out faithfully (II Cor. 3:2, 3), hold it forth boldly (Phil. 2:16), and meditate on it prayerfully (Ps. 1:2). What advantage the Jews had in the word of God having been committed to them!

### God’s Just Judgment On Jewish Unbelief

God’s judgment against the unbelief of the Jews is just (Rom. 3:1-8). Three questions are raised and answered in these verses. All the questions are actually answered in the answer to the first question. Anticipating the questions, as was Paul’s manner, he answered them before they were

raised. In his answer to the third question, “But if our unrighteousness is giving approval to the righteousness of God, what shall we say? is God unjust, the One who inflicts punishment? I am speaking according to man” (Rom. 3:5—translation), Paul’s speaking according to man was his apology for discussing something so contrary to truth. This insertion in the last part of this verse was for Paul’s protection against false accusations that were being brought against him. The apostle answered the question: “Absolutely not; otherwise how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God by my lie abounded to His glory, why am I also being judged as a sinner? and not as we are being blasphemed and as some report us to say, Let us do evil, that good may come? whose judgment is just” (Rom. 3:6-8—translation).

Paul had been condemning the Jews in chapter 2, especially verse 17. He called them hypocrites. They were religionists, but they were not saved. Their circumcision was of the flesh, but their hearts had never been circumcised by the grace of God. Paul proved his accusations in the last verses of chapter 2. Knowing the Jews would, in the light of his condemnation, question the advantage of being a member of the chosen nation, Paul answered it: “Much in every way. For in the first place because they were entrusted with the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2—translation). Stephen, who Paul before his conversion experience had seen martyred, gave a brief historical account of the people of Israel. In his account, he reminded the Jews to whom he spoke that Moses had received from God the living oracles to give to the Jewish people (Acts 7:38). Stephen quoted the historical account and made application of it. The oracles were living to Moses, but they were not living to the Jews to whom Stephen spoke.

The whole Levitical system, consisting of the tabernacle, priesthood, and offerings, given to Moses to give to the children of Israel typifies what Jesus Christ would accomplish and what He would be to His people when He came. The whole system was living, because it typified Jesus Christ the living Savior. To Moses, who had the Spirit of God and with whom God spoke face to face (Ex. 33:11), the oracles of God were living. Living oracles were given to a living man—Moses; and Moses was to give those words to the people to whom he ministered.

The Lord Jesus had spoken to the same hypocritical religionists within the same nation about Divine election and efficacious grace; but they rejected His words as being offensive to them, murmured among themselves, and turned and followed Him no more (John 6:57-66). Circumstances have not changed in the presence of the proclamation of the written word. The living Father sent the living Savior who spoke these living words to spiritually dead people. Anyone offended by God’s word is spiritually dead. Every person outside of Jesus Christ is ignorant about the most important things in life. Paul’s desire was that the brethren not be ignorant of the exemplary things recorded of Israel. “For I do not desire you to be ignorant, brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized to Moses in the sphere of the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they were drinking of the same spiritual Rock following, and the Rock was Christ. But with the majority of them God was not well-pleased; for they were killed in the desert. Now these things were made examples, so that we should not be cravers for evil things, as those also lusted. Neither be idolaters, as some of them; as it has been written: The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither may we be committing fornication, as some of them committed and fell in one day 23,000. Neither may we be trying the Lord, as some of them also tried Him and were destroyed by the serpents. Neither

be complaining, as some of them complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things were happening to them by way of example, and they were written for our admonition, to whom the ends of the ages have come” (I Cor. 10:1-11—translation). The Israelites represented a local assembly made up of saved and lost, and Paul was writing to the local assembly at Corinth, made up of saved and lost, using the Israelites as an example.

The Spirit is the One making alive; the body profits nothing (John 6:63). The words that Christ spoke are spiritual and living oracles. The only ones who understand Christ’s words in a spiritual sense, whether they are those who listened to Him in Person or those who listen to the proclamation of the word by others, will find them living in operation. The hearing ear, seeing eye, and receptive heart are possible because God has already made that one alive, thus giving him by grace the ability to hear, see, and receive the word. Nothing in the Christian life is greater than God’s word speaking to our hearts and then their becoming operative as a result of God’s having given us the ability to understand them.

The gospel comes to a quickened person not in word only but also in power: “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power [operative] and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you have known what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having welcomed the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit” (I Thess. 1:5, 6—translation). Paul thanked the Lord that this was true of the Thessalonian Christians: “And because of this we give thanks to God unceasingly, because having received the word of God which you heard from us you welcomed it not as a word from men but as it is in truth the word from God, which continually operates also in the ones believing” (I Thess. 2:13—translation). Hence, the word of God becomes the instrument not only of a person’s initial conversion experience, but it also becomes operative in his life in progressive sanctification. We learn these things from the word of God. Therefore, there is a realm of reality of truth beyond the comprehension of natural powers.

Jeremiah described the word of God as being like wheat, fire, and a hammer: “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces” (Jer. 23:28, 29). The purpose of wheat is to feed. Fire is felt. A living person cannot read and study the living word without feeling it. The result of feasting on the word is that the affectional nature is affected. An illustration of the word of God being like fire is the words of Jesus Christ burning in the hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: “And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said to each other: Was not our heart burning in us while He talked with us in the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:31, 32—translation). The word is also like a hammer that breaks.

The woman of Samaria went to Jacob’s well for literal water, but Christ told her that when she drank of that water she would thirst again. But if she drank of the living water, the water He would give her, she would never thirst again (John 4:13, 14). Blessings will flow to others through the one who has been made by the grace of God to drink of the living water (John 7:38). The living word operates in living people. Living persons are in union with the living God the Father by means of the living Son’s redemption accomplished at Calvary. That redemption is



applied by the living Holy Spirit in regeneration. Then as living stones, we experience the living word in operation by presenting our bodies as living sacrifices. This is our reasonable service as we are motivated by the living hope of the coming of the living King who shall reign forever.

### **God's Just Judgment On Universal Depravity**

Human depravity is described (Rom. 3:9-18), demonstrated (v. 20), and condemned (v. 19). All people enter this world depraved. We are rotten from head to toe: "...the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Is. 1:5, 6). The depraved sinner is passive in regeneration. The Greek word for being born from above (*gennao*) is always in the passive voice. Since it is not in the middle voice, we do not participate in our deliverance. Regeneration is by God alone. Like the leper, we are totally at God's mercy. We realize that no sin has been committed that we might not have committed, and whatever we blame in others can be found in our own hearts. We know things about ourselves that we would not tell anyone. We recognize Romans 3:10-18 as the true portrait of our own hearts.

Fourteen horrible indictments against man are recorded in Romans 3:9-18. The following three things are developed in the indictments: (1) the fact of depravity (vv. 9-12), (2) the practice of the depraved heart (vv. 13-17), and (3) the cause of sinning (v. 18). The apostle did not exaggerate the account that he gave concerning the depravity of those who were under the law of conscience, the law of Moses, or even under the purer morality of Jesus Christ.

FIRST—The fact of depravity is taught in verses 9-12. All without exception are under sin (v. 9).

1. In the first of the fourteen indictments, God described man by saying there is not one righteous (v. 10). This verse summarizes all that follows.

2. In the second of His fourteen indictments, God said that there is not one who understands (v. 11a). Everyone can talk about religion and give his opinion, even though he has never read the Bible. This is not true in any other science. Sin has incapacitated mankind for making spiritual and good moral judgments. The same thing can be said of mankind that was stated of the people of Nineveh during Jonah's time: "...Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand..." (Jonah 4:11). A person may be an accomplished scientist or a profound scholar, but without the Spirit of wisdom that comes with regeneration, he cannot spiritually discern the things of God (I Cor. 2:14). Many local assembly members are destitute of moral and spiritual understanding. People who see no harm in this or that which they desire to do have no sense of guilt, and that is the symptom of an evil conscience. We must avoid the appearance of evil. Many try to see how close to the line of sin they may go. Where is the borderline? One might as well ask how close he can get to the fire without being burned. No true husband would ask how he might give the minimum of love and fidelity to his wife and how he may have the maximum of license. That is not the language of a Christian. Christians cannot serve the Lord and be continually hunting the

borderline. No one can understand Biblical things and make Biblical judgments apart from grace and a knowledge of Holy Scripture.

3. The third indictment is that there is not one who seeks after God (v. 11b). The claim that wherever one goes people are seeking the Lord is erroneous. One in earnest about seeking the Lord has already been given the desire to seek Him. We seek Him because we have first been sought and found by God.

4. The fourth indictment is that all turned away (v. 12a) This is quoted from Ps. 14:1—“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.” The Hebrew word translated fool means the withered one, like flowers, leaves, or fruit. Since the understanding is withered by sin, man has no affinity for God. Everyone has turned from God’s way to his own way: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). The way to destruction is broad, and many are going down that path (Matt. 7:13). “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes...” (Prov. 12:15). He hugs his own brain until he strangles it. He thinks his own wit is better than God’s wisdom. Sin comes with a show of reason; it “seemeth right.” Some doctrinal truths are more important than others, but everything is important in its place. There is a way that seems right, but the ways of death are many, such as willful ignorance, formality, doing one’s best, self-righteousness, etc. But these are not products of grace. He who makes a bridge of his own shadow shall surely drown.

5. The fifth indictment is that together they became worthless (v. 12). This reminds us of Romans 1. God gives people over to a worthless mind. All homosexuals have been given over to a worthless mind.

6. The sixth indictment is that there is no one who does good (Rom. 3:12). Depravity prevents all people from doing anything pleasing to God apart from grace. In the Greek text, the translation of these words is “no not so much as one” in order to emphasize what he had said. Hence, it reads, “There is not one doing good, not so much as one” (translation).

SECOND—The practice of depravity is taught in verses 13-17.

7. The seventh indictment is included in the practice of depravity—their throat is an open grave (v. 13). This is taken from Psalm 5:9—“For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.” Such persons are corrupt in themselves and infectious to others. Unlike diseases, good health is not contagious. Likewise, grace is not contagious. Spiritual health is God-given. The nature and character of persons without grace are described by the open grave. The perfect Greek participle used here denotes a permanent and not a frequent character.

8. The eighth indictment is the second of those included in the practice of depravity—with their tongues they keep deceiving (v. 13). We use such expressions as smooth talkers and slick talkers. They speak flattery and deceit with hypocritical lips. Their speech is contrary to their nature. Their words invent, invite, and entice, so that their listeners are disarmed by compliments. Flattery is their means; hypocrisy is the motive behind the method. The water is sweet only that

it might be bitter. It has been said that they are vilest when they are best; they are bitterest when they are sweetest; they are basest when they are noblest; they are most satanic when their ill garb is manifested in the spirit in which they manifest themselves.

9. The ninth indictment is the third of those included in the practice of depravity—the poison of snakes is under their lips (v. 13). Some think the comparison is to the Egyptian cobra. This denotes a poisonous form of speech used for the injection of deadly corruption. The serpent signifies the crookedness of life and the readiness to inject his poison.

10. The tenth indictment is the fourth included in the practice of depravity—their mouth is full of profanity and hatred (v. 14). Vulgarity is the most obnoxious form of speech. Slander is the most deadly, but profanity is inexcusable.

11. The eleventh indictment is the fifth included in the practice of depravity—their feet are swift to shed blood (v. 15). That takes in the whole person. It begins with the head and goes down to the feet. Crime is the fruit of bitterness. Jesus Christ alone can solve the crime problem when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords.

12. The twelfth indictment is the sixth included in the practice of depravity—destruction and misery are in their ways (v. 16). Destruction is objective. Misery is subjective.

13. The thirteenth indictment is the seventh included in the practice of depravity—a road of peace they did not know (v. 17). There is no peace apart from Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace. God alone has the answer. We do not know what tomorrow will bring, but we know who controls tomorrow. This is the reason the children of God have peace.

THIRD—The cause of all that is included in verses 10-17 is recorded in verse 18.

14. The fourteenth indictment is that the cause of sin is the absence of reverential fear before their eyes (v. 18). We have already discussed slavish and reverential fear in a previous chapter.

The whole world of mankind is charged with depravity (Rom. 3:9-20). The following court scene will summarize these verses: (1) The accused are all under sin. (2) The judge is God. (3) The jury is the deeds of the law. (4) The charge is fourteen violations that we have considered (vv. 10-18). (5) The prosecuting attorney is the righteous, holy law of God. (6) The defense is that every mouth is stopped. (7) The verdict is that the accused are guilty before God.

In the sphere of the law, every mouth is silenced: “But we have known that whatever things the law says it says to the ones in the sphere of the law, in order that every mouth may be silenced and all the world may become guilty before God; for by reason of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him; for through law is the full knowledge [*epignosis*] of sin. But now apart from law God’s righteousness has been manifested [perfect passive indicative of *phaneroo*], being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even a righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, to all the ones believing; for there is no distinction; for all sinned and are coming short of the glory of the God” (Rom. 3:19-23—translation). This concludes the dark and bleak description of mankind. Preachers must tell people what they are before God

whether or not they like to hear it. Since Romans 1:18, we have viewed sinners as helpless and hopeless apart from the grace of God. Against this dark background, God declared the remedy beginning with Romans 3:24.