

Notes on Romans

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Introduction: The Background of Rabbi Sha'ul

1. Born in Tarsus, “no insignificant city” (Acts 21:39, 22:3)
 - a. Mentioned in an Assyrian Obelisk from 850 BCE – probably over a thousand years old in Sha’ul’s time
 - b. Sided with Caesar Augustus during the Roman civil wars, and was made a “free city” by the emperor
 - c. Renowned as a place of education; Strabo compares it to Athens and Alexandria. Was also a major trading center and port.
2. “Brought up” (ἀνατρέφω) in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)
 - a. Ανατρέφω is used to denote raising/nourishing children in Luke 4:16 (of Yeshua growing up in Nazareth) and Acts 7:21 (of the raising of Moses by Pharaoh’s daughter.
 - b. Rabbi Gamaliel ben Simeon ben Hillel, aka R. Gamaliel the Elder or Rabban Gamaliel HaZaken (information from Hegg, *Writer*, pp. 37ff)
 - i. Led the Sanhedrin from 20-40 CE
 1. The first to lead the Sanhedron single-handedly
 - a. previously it was ruled by *zugot*, “pairs,” like Hillel and Shammai
 2. was therefore given the title of Rabban (“Our Teacher”),
 - ii. Was known for his light *halakhah*
 1. Lightened the Sabbath laws for witnesses, midwives, and other public servants (b. Rosh Hashanah 23b)
 2. Enacted laws to protect women and others and generally lighten the yoke of the Law (m. Shekalim 3:6)
 3. Ruled in favor of a woman who claimed her virginity against her husband’s word (b. Ketuvot 10b)
 4. Was tolerant towards the new Messianic sect, as shown in his mercy to Kefa and Yochanan (Acts 5:38f)
 - iii. Was also known for writing “epistles” – three are preserved in the Talmud (b. Sanhedrin 11b, Tosefta, San. 2:6; y. Sanhedrin 1:2, 18d)

- iv. Finally, was known for encouraging his students to study Greek and Greek philosophy:

b. Sotah 49b

But is Greek learning, for its part, forbidden at all? And did not R. Judah say Samuel said in the name of R. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel, “What is the meaning of the following verse of Scripture: ‘My eye affects my soul, because of all the daughters of my city’ (Lam. 3:51)? “There were a thousand children in my father’s house, five hundred of them studied Torah, and five hundred studied Greek learning. “And I am the only one of them who has survived here, and my father’s brother’s son [survived] in Asia.” The household of Rabban Gamaliel is in a separate category [and may study Greek], for they had a relationship with the government.

1. We see this in Paul who three times quotes Greek philosophers in the canonical Scriptures:
 - a. In Athens, he quotes Aratus, a local philosopher (Acts 17:28)
 - b. To Titus, he quotes the Cretan philosopher Epimenides (Tit. 1:12)
 - c. In 1Co. 15:33, he quotes Meander, an Athenian author

3. Lineage/Family

- c. Of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1, Php. 3:5), the same tribe as King Saul (1Sa. 9:21) and Mordecai (Est. 2:5)
- d. His parents were both P’rushim (Acts 23:6) and Roman citizens (22:28). The family was likely both wealthy and influential, since they secured Sha’ul an education with the Elder of Israel.
- e. If some of his family rejected him, not all did; had a sister and nephew in Jerusalem who acted to protect him (Acts 23:16)
- f. **Rom 16:13** - Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.

4. Acts and Sha’ul’s Religious Identity

- a. Before the Damascus road
 - i. Though taught at the feet of Gamaliel the grandson of Hillel, Sha’ul’s subsequent actions against the Nazariners are more consistent with the School of Shimmei.
 1. What caused this change?
 - ii. Actively used his influence to persecute the Ekklesia

b. After the Damascus road

i. Nowhere does the Bible say that Sha'ul *converted* from Judaism to “Christianity”—rather, he *repented* from his persecutions of Yeshua's followers

1. Paul's change of heart is what revealed Yeshua's power to change lives and affect repentance.

2. His name

a. The idea that he changed his name from Sha'ul to Paul as a part of his conversion is a Christian myth – continued being called Sha'ul through Acts 13:9, which then notes that he had a dual name.

b. Sha'ul = Gr. *Saulos*, “the haughty walk of a prostitute”

ii. Initial activities after T'shuva

1. **Gal. 1:15-19**

But when God, who picked me out before I was born and called me by his grace, chose to reveal his Son to me, so that I might announce him to the Gentiles, I did not consult anyone; and I did not go up to Yerushalayim to see those who were emissaries before me. Instead, I immediately went off to Arabia and afterwards **returned** to Dammesek. Not until three years later did I go up to Yerushalayim to make Kefa's acquaintance, and I stayed with him for two weeks, but I did not see any of the other emissaries except Ya'akov the Lord's brother.

a. Before going to Arabia, he preached in Damascus until some of his opponents tried to kill him (Acts 9:22-25).

b. It was in Arabia where he apparently received his revelation.

i. Later in this same letter (4:25), he mentions that Mt. Sinai is in Arabia; is it possible that that is where he went to learn?

c. Paul's return to Damascus is not mentioned in Acts, most likely because Luke did not want to de-emphasize the very real danger to Paul's life there. However, this visit would have taken place before his first trip to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26f).

d. “make [his] acquaintance” = *historesai* (ἵστορησαι), not a casual visit, but one with a purpose: to inquire deeply into the person visited.

2. Must Gentiles keep the whole Torah
(written and oral) in order to be saved?
(v. 6)

iii. Note that whether Jews should keep the Torah is never brought up; it is assumed that they should!

b. Paul's actions

i. Comes to Jerusalem as an emissary (v. 2)

ii. Privately meets with the leaders of the Ekklesia and gets their initial approval (Gal. 2:1-10)

iii. Writes his letter to the Galatian assemblies he had founded before the Council (otherwise he would have referenced the Council's ruling)

iv. Disputes the Judaizers before the Council with Kefa and Ya'akov's support.

iv. Returns to Antioch (Syrian)

v. Second Journey in the Diaspora

1. Separates from Bar-Nabba over the issue of Yochanan-Mark; travels with Silas

2. Takes Timothy as a disciple in Lystra

a. Circumcises him to facilitate their mission (Acts 16:4)

3. Travels through Macedonia, passing through Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.

4. Goes to Corinth

5. Returns to Antioch

vi. Third Journey in the Diaspora

1. Travels again to Galatia

2. Stays in Ephesus until a riot forces him to flee

3. Returns to Macedonia

vii. Composes Romans while staying in Corinth (Acts 20:2-3, Rom. 15:25ff).

c. Never ceased identifying himself as (and therefore living as) a Pharisee

- i. **Act 23:6** - But knowing that one part of the Sanhedrin consisted of Tz'dukim and the other of P'rushim, Sha'ul shouted, "Brothers, I myself am a Parush and the son of P'rushim; and it is concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead that I am being tried!"
- ii. **2Ti. 1:3 (NASB)** - I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience **the way my forefathers did . . .**
- iii. Continued to follow the whole Torah, even the sacrificial Temple service

1. **Act 18:18** - Sha'ul remained for some time, then said good-bye to the brothers and sailed off to Syria, after having his hair cut short in Cenchrea, because he had taken a vow; with him were Priscilla and Aquila.

2. **Act 21:18-26**

The next day Sha'ul and the rest of us went in to Ya'akov, and all the elders were present. After greeting them, Sha'ul described in detail each of the things God had done among the Gentiles through his efforts.

On hearing it, they praised God; but they also said to him, "You see, brother, how many tens of thousands of believers there are among the Judeans, and they are all zealots for the Torah. Now what they have been told about you is that you are teaching all the Jews living among the Goyim to apostatize from Moshe, telling them not to have a b'rit-milah for their sons and not to follow the traditions.

"What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. Take them with you, be purified with them, and pay the expenses connected with having their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that there is nothing to these rumors which they have heard about you; but that, on the contrary, you yourself stay in line and keep the Torah.

"However, in regard to the Goyim who have come to trust in Yeshua, we all joined in writing them a letter with our decision that they should abstain from what had been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled and from fornication."

The next day Sha'ul took the men, purified himself along with them and entered the Temple to give notice of when the period of purification would be finished and the offering would have to be made for each of them.

3. **Act 24:17** - "After an absence of several years, I came to Yerushalayim to bring a charitable gift to my nation and to offer sacrifices. It was in connection with the latter that they

found me in the Temple. I had been ceremonially purified, I was not with a crowd, and I was not causing a disturbance.”

- iv. W.D. Davies, former Professor of New Testament studies at Princeton University, concludes,

Paul belonged to the main stream of first-century Judaism, and . . . elements in his thought, which are often labeled as Hellenistic, might well be derived from Judaism. . . [I]n the central points of his interpretation of the Christian dispensation Paul is grounded in an essentially Rabbinic world of thought . . . the Apostle was, in short, a Rabbi become Christian and was therefore primarily governed both in life and thought by Pharisaic concepts, which he had baptized ‘unto Christ.’ (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 1 and 16)

- d. His beliefs about his mission

- i. **Gal. 1:15** - But when God, who picked me out before I was born and called me by his grace . . .

1. **Jer. 1:5** - Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you. Before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you. I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.

2. **Isa. 49:1-6**

Listen, islands, to me; and listen, you peoples, from far: the LORD has called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother has he made mention of my name. He has made my mouth like a sharp sword while hiding me in the shadow of his hand; he has made me like a sharpened arrow while concealing me in his quiver. He said to me, "You are my servant, Isra'el, through whom I will show my glory." But I said, "I have toiled in vain, spent my strength for nothing, futility." Yet my cause is with ADONAI, my reward is with my God.

So now ADONAI says - he formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Ya'akov back to him, to have Isra'el gathered to him, so that I will be honored in the sight of ADONAI, my God having become my strength, he has said, "It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya'akov and restore the offspring of Isra'el. I will also make you a light to the nations, so my salvation can spread to the ends of the earth."

Chapter 1

Greeting

Rom 1:1 From: Sha'ul, a slave of the Messiah Yeshua, an emissary because I was called and set apart for the Good News of God.

1. "Slave" = Gr. δοῦλος, equivalent to Heb. 'eved עֶבֶד
 - a. Thayer's Greek Lexicon (p. 158) defines δοῦλος as "one who gives himself up wholly to another's will (cf. Gal.2:20).
2. Like Abraham's 'eved Eliazer, a *sheliach* (an emissary) "sent forth" to bring Isaac back his bride from the lands of the Gentiles

The Good News

Rom 1:2 God promised this Good News in advance through his prophets in the Tanakh.

1. Good News = Gr. εὐαγγέλιον, *basar* (בְּשָׂרָה) in Heb.
 - a. בְּשָׂרָה also means "meat," since the ANE response to hearing good news was to throw a feast
 - i. The *Shalom* Offering
2. The Good News (*Basar*) in the Tanakh:
 - a. **Isa 40:9-11** - You who bring good news to Tziyon, get yourself up on a high mountain; you who bring good news to Yerushalayim, cry out at the top of your voice! Don't be afraid to shout out loud! Say to the cities of Y'hudah, "Here is your God! Here comes Adonai ELOHIM with power, and his arm will rule for him. Look! His reward is with him, and his recompense is before him. He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering his lambs with his arm, carrying them against his chest, gently leading the mother sheep."
 - b. **Isa 52:7-10** - How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, proclaiming shalom, bringing good news of good things, announcing salvation and saying to Tziyon, "Your God is King!" Listen! Your watchmen are raising their voices, shouting for joy together. For they will see, before their own eyes, ADONAI returning to Tziyon. Break out into joy! Sing together, you ruins of Yerushalayim! For ADONAI has comforted his people, he has redeemed Yerushalayim! ADONAI has bared his holy arm in the sight of every nation, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.
 - c. **Isa 61:1-4** - The Spirit of Adonai ELOHIM is upon me, because ADONAI has anointed me to announce good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim freedom to the captives, to let out into light those bound in the dark; to proclaim the year of the favor of ADONAI and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, yes, provide for those in Tziyon who mourn, giving them garlands instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a cloak of praise instead of a heavy spirit, so that they will be called oaks of righteousness planted by ADONAI, in which he takes pride. They will rebuild the ancient ruins, restore sites long destroyed; they will renew the ruined cities, destroyed many generations ago.
 - i. Quoted by Yeshua in regards to Himself in Luke 4:18f

- d. **Nah. 1:15** - Look! On the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, proclaiming shalom. Keep your festivals, Y'hudah, fulfill your vows; for B'liya'al will never pass through you again; he has been completely destroyed.

The Hymn of Messiah

Rom 1:3 It concerns his Son - he is descended from David physically;

Rom 1:4 he was powerfully demonstrated to be Son of God spiritually, set apart by his having been resurrected from the dead; he is Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord.

1. Written in the form of poetry, or a hymn
 - a. “descended from David physically”
 - i. **Isa 11:1, 10-11, 12** - But a branch will emerge from the trunk of Yishai, a shoot will grow from his roots. . . On that day the root of Yishai, which stands as a banner for the peoples - the Goyim will seek him out, and the place where he rests will be glorious. On that day Adonai will raise his hand again, a second time, to reclaim the remnant of his people . . . from the four corners of the earth.
 - ii. **Davis:** The King James Version translated “made of the seed” a better and more literal translation.
 - b. “powerfully demonstrated to be Son of God spiritually”
 - i. **Davis:** Thayer interprets this passage as “That which has been determined” adding, “for although Christ was the son of God before his resurrection yet he was openly such among men by this transcendent and crowning event.” [...] Notice he was not only declared the son of God, but he also had power.
 - ii. **2Sa 7:12-16** - When your days come to an end and you sleep with your ancestors, I will establish one of your descendants to succeed you, one of your own flesh and blood; and I will set up his rulership. He will build a house for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. **I will be a father for him, and he will be a son for me.** If he does something wrong, I will punish him with a rod and blows, just as everyone gets punished; nevertheless, my grace will not leave him, as I took it away from Sha'ul, whom I removed from before you. Thus your house and your kingdom will be made secure forever before you; your throne will be set up forever.”
 - iii. **Psa 2:7-9** - "I will proclaim the decree: ADONAI said to me, 'You are my son; today I became your father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance; the whole wide world will be your possession. You will break them with an iron rod, shatter them like a clay pot.'"
 - c. “set apart by his having been resurrected from the dead”

- i. Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead was so important to Pharisaic (P'rushi) Judaism that those who denied it were said to be denied a place in the 'Olam Haba, the World to Come.
- ii. However, Yeshua was set apart by His unique, individual Resurrection, the Firstfruits of all who would follow (1Co 15:20f), as proof that the Father accepted His Sacrifice

Isa 53:10 - . . . yet it pleased ADONAI to crush him with illness, to see if he would present himself as a guilt offering. If he does, he will see his offspring; and he will prolong his days; and at his hand ADONAI's desire will be accomplished.

d. "he is Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord."

- i. i.e. "Yeshua the Anointed King, by virtue of being David's Son, and Lord of all Creation, by virtue of being God's Son, proven by His Resurrection."
- ii. **Php 2:6-11** - Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force. On the contrary, he emptied himself, in that he took the form of a slave by becoming like human beings are. And when he appeared as a human being, he humbled himself still more by becoming obedient even to death - death on a stake as a criminal! Therefore God raised him to the highest place and gave him the name above every name; that in honor of the name given Yeshua, every knee will bow - in heaven, on earth and under the earth and every tongue will acknowledge that Yeshua the Messiah is ADONAI - to the glory of God the Father.

Isa 45:22-24 Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God; there is no other. In the name of myself I have sworn, from my mouth has rightly gone out, a word that will not return - that to me every knee will bow and every tongue will swear about me that only in ADONAI are justice and strength."

Called and Elected

Rom 1:5 Through him we received grace and were given the work of being an emissary on his behalf promoting trust-grounded obedience among all the Gentiles,
 Rom 1:6 including you, who have been called by Yeshua the Messiah.

1. Grace, election, commission

- a. "we" = Israel (ελαβομεν is a verb ("received") written in the plural form)
- b. "received grace and were given the work of being an emissary," ελαβομεν χαριν και αποστολην, lit. "received grace and ambassadorship"

- i. Here Sha'ul is speaking of Israel as a whole receiving a mission to be ambassador of the Good News—a mission that only a few took up
- ii. grace = *χαριτι*, an unmerited favor, esp. from a patron, shown in the form of a concrete gift

The socially-required response to *χαριτι* was to give back to the patron in the form of loyalty. To refuse to do so brought dishonor on the recipient, not the patron. [find ref]

Heb. equiv. *chen* (חן), favor, acceptance, “find favor in the eyes of”

- c. “called” = the same word Sha'ul used to describe his own special calling, meaning that our calling is likewise from sin and into an ambassadorial role for the King
 - i. **Mat 22:14** – “. . . for many are invited (*κλητοι*, ‘called ones’), but few are chosen (*εκλεκτοι*, ‘elect ones,’ e.g., chosen and sealed with election).”

3. “trust-grounded obedience”

- a. Often translated “obedience of faith,” and erroneously thought to mean mere obedience to the call to trust God
- b. Rather, means an obedience that comes from trusting God

Personal Greetings and Background on Roman Messianism

Rom 1:7 To: All those in Rome whom God loves, who have been called, who have been set apart for him: Grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

1. Shalom from God

- a. Sha'ul's usual greeting, found in almost all of his letters

2. Rome

- a. Had several, perhaps up to eleven, synagogues
 - i. Ch. 16's “shout outs” suggest seven or eight Messianic assemblies (Nanos, *Romans* 77, n. 124)
- b. Evidence of mixed communities of Jews and Christians in Rome (Nanos, *ibid.* 70f)
 - i. Christian inscription and artifacts in Jewish catacombs

- ii. “shared literature such as hymnals and prayer books”
 - A form of the Amidah was used as a liturgical prayer in the early Ekklesia [find reference]
- iii. Christian use of non-rabbinic Jewish apocrypha
- iv. “shared language and idioms,”
- v. “shared Sabbath and food regulations,” (e.g., not eating blood or strangled meat, Acts 15:29)
- vi. The Ekklesia borrowed heavily from the synagogue in its own organization and service

Rome’s Reputation and Fall

Rom 1:8 First, I thank my God through Yeshua the Messiah for all of you, because the report of your trust is spreading throughout the whole world.

1. Early attestation that Rome’s assembly was founded by Peter and Paul and that it enjoyed high status among the assemblies – Dionysius of Corinth (c. 170), Irenaeus (c. 180)
 - a. “Through the resources which ye have sent from the beginning, ye Romans, keep up the custom of the Romans handed down by the fathers, which your blessed Bishop Sorer has not only preserved, but added to, sending a splendid gift to the saints, and exhorting with blessed words those brethren who go up to Rome, as an affectionate father his children.” (Dionysius of Corinth, *Fragments of a Letter to Rome*, ch. 1)
 - b. “For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church [in Rome], on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, ch. 3.2)
 - i. Irenaeus was the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of Yochanan the Emissary.
2. However, even as early as the second half of the 2nd Century, the Roman bishops had started to use their influence to pressure the other assemblies, *particularly on leaving Jewish observances*.
 - a. Anicetus, Bishop of Rome (154-168) tried to influence Polycarp to change the date of Passover; Polycarp refused.
 - b. Victor I (190-202) threatened to excommunicate the eastern assemblies if they would not change the date of Passover from the 14th of Nisan.
 - i. Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, replied that he was not afraid of Victor’s threats.

- ii. Irenaeus, while sympathetic to Victor’s views, rebuked him for overstepping his authority.
 - c. Calixtus I (218-223) was the first to try to use Mat. 16:18 to press his claim of supremacy among the bishops.
 - i. Tertullian of Carthage, the “Father of Latin Christianity,” called him a Usurper
 - d. Innocent I (402-417) called himself “Ruler of the Church of God,” claiming the right to settle the more important matters of controversy for the whole Ekklesia
 - e. Leo I, “the Great” (440-461), called by some historians the First Pope, taking control of the fracturing West in a time of great difficulty and even convincing Attila the Hun to spare the city in 452 CE. Even so, he continued to try to grow Rome’s influence over the other Sees.
3. Nevertheless, well beyond the 4th Century, Christendom was dominated by no less than FIVE centers of officialdom: Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, *and Jerusalem*. While Rome was largely unchallenged in the West, it was never accepted as having authority in the East.

A Debt to All Cultures

Rom 1:9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit by spreading the Good News about his Son, is my witness that I regularly remember you

Rom 1:10 in my prayers; and I always pray that somehow, now or in the future, I might, by God's will, succeed in coming to visit you.

Rom 1:11 For I long to see you, so that I might share with you some spiritual gift that can make you stronger -

Rom 1:12 or, to put it another way, so that by my being with you, we might, through the faith we share, encourage one another.

Rom 1:13 Brothers, I want you to know that although I have been prevented from visiting you until now, I have often planned to do so, in order that I might have some fruit among you, just as I have among the other Gentiles.

1. While Kefa is given joint credit with Sha’ul for founding the Roman assembly—and among Catholics, given preeminent credit—he had obviously not visited the city at the time that Sha’ul wrote his letter:
 - a. **Rom 15:20** - . . . making it my aim to proclaim the Good News, not where Messiah was already named, that I might not build on another’s foundation.
2. Why did Sha’ul so wish to visit Rome?
 - a. Its centrality and importance: “All roads lead to Rome.”

- b. Possibly because he had friends from Rome who had already been exiled for the sake of Messiah by the command of Claudius Caesar:
 - i. Priscilla and Aquilla (Rom. 18:2)
 - ii. Claudius “expelled the Jews from Rome, who were continually making tumults, being moved thereunto by one Chrestus” (Suetonius, *The Life of Claudius*, ch. 25).
- c. To give strength to a weakened and divided assembly (“some spiritual gift”)
 - i. The expulsion would have left the Gentile Christians for a time without Scriptures, rabbinic teaching, or the ability to keep any of the “Jewish” commands without risking exile or worse themselves.
 - ii. By the time the Jewish believers were allowed back, the Gentile Christians would have had to develop their own practices apart from the Torah in order to survive.
 - iii. Sha’ul’s unique gift among the Emissaries was his ability to bridge the gap between Jew and Greek, drawing both together by subtle allusions to their respective cultures in his writings.
 - iv. He was apparently successful, given the close ties the Ekklesia and the synagogue seem to have enjoyed in Rome for some time thereafter (see notes on 1:7, above).
- d. “so that by my being with you, we might, through the faith we share, encourage one another”
 - i. Sha’ul’s special mission was to the Gentiles, but he never ceased to love and strive for his own people.
 - ii. If he could bring peace between the estranged factions of Jew and Gentile in Rome, this would be a great confirmation of his calling

3. “Prevented from visiting”

- a. Not the first time he had been withstood from taking the Gospel to a certain place; prevented by the *Ruach* from going to Asia (Acts 16:6)

A Debt to the Gentiles

Rom 1:14 I owe a debt to both civilized Greeks and uncivilized people, to both the educated and the ignorant;
 Rom 1:15 therefore I am eager to proclaim the Good News also to you who live in Rome.

- 1. Sha’ul’s debt – he certainly had a *mission*, but why a *debt*?
 - a. Greeks and βαρβάρους (“barbarians”)

- b. The idea of using all influences, symbols, and philosophies for the glory of the Holy One was not unique to Paul, though he certainly exemplified it!
 - i. Similarity to Philo (cf. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* 96f)

Philo was a fully Torah-observant Jew

- a. “He roundly condemned those Jews who ignored the literal meaning of the Law as being worthless in favor of a symbolic meaning. Thus circumcision might be interpreted as a ‘sign of the excision of pleasure and all passions’, etc., but nevertheless had to be observed literally.” (ibid.)

However, he borrowed frequently from Greek ideas.

Object was not to use the traditions of Judaism to support Hellenistic philosophy and mystery religions—but the other way around!

- b. “Judaism not only in the Dispersion but even more so in Jerusalem itself was eager to adopt any convention of Hellenistic religion in order to exalt the one God and His Torah; Judaism could indeed be assimilated to a mystery cult to a remarkable degree—for missionary ends.” (ibid., 97)
- ii. In the same way, Paul may have used imagery from both mainstream philosophy and the pagan mystery religions in explaining Messiah to his varied audiences. Examples:

Another Adam as a “spiritual” man and divine figure in contrast to the earthly Adam (1Co 15:45)

The concept of dying with a deity in order to be raised again into a new life (cf. Col. 2:20, 3:3)

True union with Deity, e.g., “in Messiah” (ἐν Χριστῷ)

- 2. Likewise, we too should be ever-ready to use every element—every **meme**—of our culture to explain who and what Yeshua truly is to our audiences
 - a. Meme: An idea, piece of imagery or symbolism
 - b. Sources of Memes
 - i. Liturature

Religious works from *both* the Jewish and Christians sides
 - ii. Movies and TV
 - iii. Music
 - iv. Jokes

- v. Political discourse
- c. The power of memes:
 - i. “Whenever we read a good book, tour a foreign country, comfort a distraught friend or engage in a stimulating conversation, the experience prompts physical changes in our brain. This remarkable process, which scientists call *spoutina*, involves the rapid growth of new neural connections—dendrites, axons, and the synapses between them . . . stimulated neurons produce new synapses in as little as *ten minutes!*

“The enemy’s strategy is simple. He wants to influence the kinds of thoughts that enter our minds so he can alter the neural structure of our brains. . . . An event lasting all of seconds can cause long-lasting neurological change.” (Otis, *Twilight Labyrinth* 158)

In other words, there is a danger that the meme can go both ways—subversion of paganism or subversion to paganism!

- d. Examples that went both ways:
 - i. Christmas
 - ii. Lent and Easter
- e. Protecting against the danger of memes:
 - i. **Eph 4:27** - Do not give the Enemy a foothold
 - ii. **Php 4:8** - In conclusion, brothers, focus your thoughts on what is true, noble, righteous, pure, lovable or admirable, on some virtue or on something praiseworthy.
 - iii. **2Co 10:3-5** - For although we do live in the world, we do not wage war in a worldly way; because the weapons we use to wage war are not worldly. On the contrary, they have God's power for demolishing strongholds. We demolish arguments and every arrogance that raises itself up against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it **obey** the Messiah.

The key of obedience to God’s Word:

 - a. Philo took every Greek philosophical idea and made it point to the God of Israel and His Torah—by continuing to keep the Torah in all of its particulars even as he subverted the Greek culture.
 - b. So did Sha’ul!
 - iv. **Rom 12:2** - In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the *'olam hazeh* (the present world). Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you

will know what God wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed.

Sha'ul's Thesis

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God's powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile.

Rom 1:17 For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust - as the Tanakh puts it, "But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust." (Hab. 2:4)

1. "Not ashamed"

- a. Despite the fact that the Good News had resulted in repeated rejection of Sha'ul by his kinsman

- i. The cause of the rejection: Gentile inclusion

The Jews of Pisidian Antioch only turned on the Message when the Gentiles of the city came en-masse to hear it (Acts 13:44f)

Likewise elsewhere in Galatia (Acts 14)

Sha'ul actually had to contend with not only the Judaizers, but with those of his own party (the P'rushim) who wanted to limit Gentile inclusion by making circumcision and Torah-keeping prerequisites for inclusion (Acts 15:1ff).

An accusation that he was bringing Gentiles within the court of the Israelites in the Temple caused a riot in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27ff).

Rom 11:28 - With respect to the Good News they (the Jews) are hated (enemies) for your (the Gentiles') sake. . .

- b. It is all too tempting and easy to withdraw from the truth of a message, to "soften" it to fit in with one's own people, but we have to speak the truth without shame
 - i. That doesn't give us carte blanche to be deliberately abrasive, of course

2. "To the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile"

- a. To the Jew first (cf. Stern, *Commentary* 329f)

- i. Not just chronologically first, though this is historically true
 - ii. Not just referring to the Jew's "covenantal priority," the special relationship between Israel and God above all nations, though this is also true.

iii. “Rather, ‘to the Jew first’ means that there is a ‘present priority’ to proclaim the Gospel to Jews, and the Church should acknowledge it. . . . Thus it is because of the need to understand ‘*proton*’ as underlining the ‘present priority’ of bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people that I translate it here by the word ‘especially.’”

b. “equally to the Gentile”

i. Bringing *both* into His Kingdom has ever been God’s plan, and thus He set apart Emissaries to send to both camps.

3. "But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust."

a. Full quote from Hab. 2:4 – “Look at the proud: he is inwardly not upright; but the righteous will attain life through trusting faithfulness.”

i. “trusting faithfulness” = Heb. *be’emunato* (בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ), “faithfulness, trustworthiness, integrity”

Regarding Hab. 2:4, Mounce writes, “The life of the righteous that will survive judgment must be built on faithfulness, trustworthiness, and integrity toward God and others (cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38)” (*Dic.* 234, “Faithfulness”).

Deu. 32:4 - The Rock! His work is perfect, for all his ways are just. A trustworthy (אֱמוּנָה) God who does no wrong, he is righteous and straight.

a. Would make no sense rendered, “A *trusting* God who does no wrong . . .”

b. Trust = Gr. *pistis*, (πίστις)

i. How the world sees faith

“Faith is believing in things you know just ain’t so.” – Mark Twain

“Faith may be defined briefly as an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable.” –H.L. Mencken

ii. Variable meanings (Mounce, *Dic.* 232f)

Belief in a person or ideal, e.g., putting trust in that person

A doctrine or collection of beliefs

Conviction or certainty in a belief

Faithfulness or trustworthiness

a. The primary meaning of the related word *pistos* (πίστος), which means “faithful, trustworthy, reliable,

dependable,” and is used as such in Deu. 32:4 (see above)

- b. **Rom 3:3** - If some of them were unfaithful, so what? Does their faithlessness cancel God's faithfulness (πιστιν)?

iii. From *Vines* 401, “Faith”

“The main elements of faith in its relation to the invisible God . . . are

- a. (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God’s revelation or truth, e.g., 2 Thess. 2:11, 12;
 - b. (2) a personal surrender to Him, John 1:12;
 - c. (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender, 2 Cor. 5:7.”
- iv. In the ancient world, was used to describe the **loyalty and fidelity** that a client (e.g., the recipient of unearned grace (*charis*, χάρις)) was expected to give to his patron. (See J.P. Holding’s [What Is Faith?](#))

Tit 2:9f - Tell slaves to submit to their masters in everything, to give satisfaction without talking back or pilfering. On the contrary, they should demonstrate complete *faithfulness* (πιστιν) always, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Deliverer more attractive.

This loyalty stemmed from not only an awareness of the honor due the patron, but from trusting in his patron’s past and continuing generosity.

This loyalty did not *earn* a patron’s gift—it was the proper *response* to it.

c. Other citations of Habakkuk

- i. **Gal 3:11f** - Now it is evident that no one comes to be declared righteous by God through legalism, since "The person who is righteous will attain life by trusting and being faithful." Furthermore, legalism is not based on trusting and being faithful, but on [a misuse of] the text that says, "Anyone who does these things will attain life through them."

Salvation comes through loyalty to the Living God, not through keeping the Torah correctly a certain amount of the time.

- ii. **Heb 10:32-39** - But remember the earlier days, when, after you had received the light, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. Sometimes you were publicly disgraced and persecuted, while at other times you stood loyally by those who were treated this way. For you shared the sufferings of those who had been put in prison. Also when

your possessions were seized, you accepted it gladly; since you knew that what you possessed was better and would last forever. So don't throw away that courage of yours, which carries with it such a great reward. For you need to hold out; so that, by having done what God wills, you may receive what he has promised. For "There is so, so little time! The One coming will indeed come, he will not delay. But the person who is righteous will live his life by trusting, and if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." However, we are not the kind who shrink back and are destroyed; on the contrary, we keep trusting and thus preserve our lives!

- d. One cannot profess to have loyalty without taking action
 - i. **Jas 2:17-18** - Thus, faith by itself, unaccompanied by actions, is dead. But someone will say that you have faith and I have actions. Show me this faith of yours without the actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions!
 - ii. Faith, however, is a divine work in us . . . a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. . . Hence a man is ready and glad, without compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, in love and praise to God, who has shown him this grace; and thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light fires. . . He who does not these works is a faithless man. (Martin Luther, *Romans* (Kregel, 1976) xvii)

God's Visibility in the Creation

Rom 1:18 What is revealed is God's anger from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who in their wickedness keep suppressing the truth;

Rom 1:19 because what is known about God is plain to them, since God has made it plain to them.

Rom 1:20 For ever since the creation of the universe his invisible qualities - both his eternal power and his divine nature - have been clearly seen, because they can be understood from what he has made. Therefore, they have no excuse;

1. HaShem jealously guards His title of Creator
 - a. **Isa 45:11-12** - Thus says ADONAI, the Holy One of Isra'el, his Maker: "You ask for signs concerning my children? You give orders concerning the work of my hands? I am the one who made the earth! I created human beings on it! I-my hands - stretched out the heavens, and directed all their number."
 - b. **Psa 19:1-6** - The heavens declare the glory of God, the dome of the sky speaks the work of his hands. Every day it utters speech, every night it reveals knowledge. Without speech, without a word, without their voices being heard, their line goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them he places a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from

the bridal chamber, with delight like an athlete to run his race. It rises at one side of the sky, circles around to the other side, and nothing escapes its heat.

2. Proofs of God from nature

a. The Proof of First Cause:

Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
The universe began to exist.
Therefore, the universe has a cause.

The universe has a cause.
There cannot be an infinite regress of causes.
Therefore, there must be an uncaused Entity that caused the universe to exist.

i. Robert Jastrow wrote in 1978 (*God and the Astronomers*):

I think part of the answer is that scientists cannot bear the thought of a natural phenomenon which cannot be explained, even with unlimited time and money. There is a kind of religion in science; it is the religion of a person who believes that there is order and harmony in the Universe. . . . This religious faith of the scientist is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the known laws of physics are not valid and as a product of forces or circumstances we cannot discover. When that happens, the scientist has lost control. If he really examined the implications, he would be traumatized . . . (p. 104)

For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries. (pp. 105f)

b. The Anthropic Principle

i. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of variables in our universe that could conceivably be different (cf. Missler, *Genesis*). Examples:

The relative strengths of the four forces.

a. If gravity were weaker, stars would not generate heavy elements

b. If it were stronger, stars would burn up too quickly

Expansion rate of the universe • Ratio of electron to proton mass • Age of the universe • Expansion rate of the universe • Entropy level of the universe • Mass of the universe • Uniformity of the universe • Stability of the proton • Fine structure constants • Velocity of light • Beryllium,

carbon, oxygen nuclear energy levels • Distance between stars • Rate of luminosity increase for stars • Number of Stars

Unique properties of water

- c. less dense as a solid than as a liquid
- d. is perfectly suited to enable the shaping of proteins and strands of DNA
- e. And yet it is found in abundance, especially on earth

As little a difference as 1 in 10^{60} in the gravity or expansion rate would have caused either a re-collapse of the universe too soon for life to exist or for it to fly apart too quickly for planets to form.

- f. **Gen 1:6-8** - God said, "Let there be a dome (Heb. *raqiya* רָקִיעַ, something spread out by hammering, like a sheet of gold, an expanse) in the middle of the water; let it divide the water from the water." God made the dome and divided the water under the dome from the water above the dome; that is how it was, and God called the dome Sky. So there was evening, and there was morning, a second day.
- g. **Isa 40:22** - He who sits above the circle of the earth - for whom its inhabitants appear like grasshoppers - stretches out the heavens like a curtain, spreads them out like a tent to live in.
- h. "stretched out the heavens" – Isa. 42:5, 44:24, 45:12, 51:13; Zec. 12:1

ii. Variables here on earth:

Parent star (Sun) birth date • Parent star age • Parent star distance • Parent star mass • Parent star color • Surface gravity • Distance from parent star • Thickness of earth's crust • Rotation period • Lunar gravitational interaction • Magnetic field • Axial tilt • Albedo (reflectivity) • Oxygen to nitrogen ratio • Carbon dioxide and water vapor levels • Ozone level • Atmospheric electric discharge rate • Seismic activity. All finely tuned...

iii. In the fall of 1973, Brandon Carter, a well-respected astrophysicist and cosmologist from Cambridge University, presented a paper called, "Large Number Coincidences and the Anthropic Principle in Cosmology," which argued that the only factor that united the measurements of the universe's variables is that they were all necessary for life to exist.

- iv. “. . . even in its supposedly first second [of existence] the universe . . . has to know in advance what it is going to be before it knows how to start itself. For in accordance to the Big Bang Theory, for instance, at a time of 10⁻⁴³ seconds, the universe has to know how many types of neutrino there are going to be at the time of 1 second. This is so in order that it starts off expanding at the right rate to fit the eventual number of neutrino types.” (Astronomer Fred Hoyle, quoted by Brower, *Unrandom Universe* 63)
- c. When one starts looking at the origin of life, the issue becomes even more incredible!

- i. Irreducible complexity

Michael Denton, 1986

Although the tiniest bacterial cells are incredibly small, each is in effect a veritable micro-miniaturized factory containing thousands of exquisitely designed pieces of intricate molecular machinery, made up of 100,000,000,000 atoms, far more complicated than any machine built by man and absolutely without parallel in the nonliving world.

- ii. Theory of Evolution prophesied:

2Pe 3:3-7 - First, understand this: during the Last Days, scoffers will come, following their own desires and asking, "Where is this promised 'coming' of his? For our fathers have died, and everything goes on just as it has since the beginning of creation." But, wanting so much to be right about this, they overlook the fact that it was by God's Word that long ago there were heavens, and there was land which arose out of water and existed between the waters, and that by means of these things the world of that time was flooded with water and destroyed. It is by that same Word that the present heavens and earth, having been preserved, are being kept for fire until the Day of Judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

- iii. Also spoken of (obliquely) in the next section:

Ignoring the Creator

Rom 1:21 because, although they know who God is, they do not glorify him as God or thank him. On the contrary, they have become futile in their thinking; and their undiscerning hearts have become darkened.

Rom 1:22 Claiming to be wise, they have become fools!

Rom 1:23 In fact, they have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for mere images, like a mortal human being, or like birds, animals or reptiles!

1. Evolution is constantly being used to put those who believe in God on the defensive.
 - a. Taught by government mandate in our schools without a chance for rebuttal

- b. Those in the fields of science who challenge it often have their careers destroyed – see Ben Stein’s “Expelled”
2. Evolution claims that God didn’t create man – we evolved from “birds, animals, and reptiles”
- a. Some have taken refuge from the abiogenesis problem by suggesting that we were “seeded” by an extraterrestrial source

The Curse of Atheism

Rom 1:24 This is why God has given them up to the vileness of their hearts' lusts, to the shameful misuse of each other's bodies.

Rom 1:25 They have exchanged the truth of God for falsehood, by worshipping and serving created things, rather than the Creator - praised be he for ever. Amen.

Rom 1:26 This is why God has given them up to degrading passions; so that their women exchange natural sexual relations for unnatural;

Rom 1:27 and likewise the men, giving up natural relations with the opposite sex, burn with passion for one another, men committing shameful acts with other men and receiving in their own persons the penalty appropriate to their perversion.

- 1. Homosexuality and other sexual sins
 - a. listed among the “abomination” (*to'ebah* תועבה) sins (Lev. 20:13),
 - i. along with other sexual sins (Lev. 18-20), including cross-dressing (Deu. 22:5)
 - ii. idolatry (Deu. 7:25) and human sacrifice (Lev. 18:21, Deu. 12:31)

Lev. 18 plants human sacrifice in the midst of a list of sexual sins, suggesting a connections
 - iii. impure sacrifice to the Holy One (Deu. 17:1)
 - iv. occultism, astrology, séances (Deu. 18:9-12)
 - v. dishonest business practices (Deu. 25:14-16)
 - b. Sins of *infidelity*, sexual perversion, and idolatry/occultism are all tied together
 - i. Prostitution of both men and women was tied to pagan temples
 - ii. Cross-dressing was tied to pagan rites

The cult of Diana/Artemis in particular was infamous for this

Celtic priests were likewise infamous for their sexual preferences—among the Romans!

In modern Hinduism, many gods are connected to sex—and many idols to sexual organs

- iii. To this day, sexual sins of all varieties are common among occultists and shamans, and seen as a key to “higher levels”

2. “Gave them up”

Psa 81:10-12 - I am ADONAI your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth, and I will fill it. But my people did not listen to my voice; Isra'el would have none of me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to live by their own plans.

- a. Gr. *παρέδωκεν*, turned them over to the sin for punishment, as Yeshua was handed over to the Romans for crucifixion (Mat. 26:2)
- b. *All* sexual sin is a curse for idolatry
 - i. To Sha’ul, sexual perversion was not simply a sin in isolation, but was the direct *result* of turning from the living God to idols—a curse resulting from a more fundamental sin
 - ii. Note that he is referring to the *societal*, not the *personal* level.

Many homosexuals struggle for a long time with the issue of their faith.

Some reject faith

Some seek a more liberal “faith” that doesn’t condemn their sin

- iii. From CatholicExchange.com, “How Much Time Does the US Have?” by Charles S. LiMandri

A friend recently asked: "How long do we have left as a society?" In answer to that question I informed her about an interesting and comprehensive study that a renowned British anthropologist, Joseph Unwin, PhD., presented to the British Psychological Society in 1935. Unwin sought to prove that the traditional monogamous model for marriage was not essential to the maintenance of a healthy society. After studying 86 different cultures, across time and continents –and much to his surprise — he came to the inescapable conclusion that the traditional male-female monogamous model for marriage was indeed the best foundation for a healthy and productive society.

Unwin found that societies that adopted this model typically took about three generations to reach their peak of productivity and progress. After that, frequently, a gradual development of complacency and licentiousness would take place and what he described as an "outburst

of homosexuality" would sometimes occur. When that happened, and the society started to move away from the traditional model of male-female monogamous marriage as its foundation, it would begin to unravel. It would then take another three generations of deterioration from that point for the society to collapse.

c. The case of Sodom and Gomorrah

i. **Eze 16:49f** - The crimes of your sister S'dom were pride and gluttony; she and her daughters were careless and complacent, so that they did nothing to help the poor and needy. They were arrogant and committed disgusting acts before me; so that when I saw it, I swept them away.

1. Pride – can also mean “Excellency” or “majesty” when referring to God, seeing ourselves as equal to God, the first step in denying God
2. Gluttony – Having so much and sharing so little
3. Careless – lit. “abundance,” which leads to carelessness, which in turn leads to
4. Complacent – lit. “idleness,” living for the entertainment of the moment
5. Did nothing to help the poor and needy
6. Arrogant – lit. “lifted up,” exalted, haughty, a step beyond pride
7. Committed disgusting acts before me – were so arrogant that they were not even ashamed of their sin, but in effect paraded it before God

a. **Isa 5:18** - Woe to those who begin by pulling at transgression with a thread, but end by dragging sin along as if with a cart rope.

Makes one think of our gay pride parades, doesn't it?

b. **Isa 5:19f** - They say, "We want God to speed up his work, to hurry it along, so we can see it! We want the Holy One of Isra'el's plan to come true right now, so we can be sure of it!" Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who change darkness into light and light into darkness, who change bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter!

ii. The open abominable sins were the *end result* of Sodom's previous sins, not the sole reason God destroyed her

Other Vices

Rom 1:28 In other words, since they have not considered God worth knowing, God has given them up to worthless ways of thinking; so that they do improper things.

Rom 1:29 They are filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and vice; stuffed with jealousy, murder, quarrelling, dishonesty and ill-will; they are gossips,

Rom 1:30 slanderers, haters of God; they are insolent, arrogant and boastful; they plan evil schemes; they disobey their parents;

Rom 1:31 they are brainless, faithless, heartless and ruthless.

Rom 1:32 They know well enough God's righteous decree that people who do such things deserve to die; yet not only do they keep doing them, but they applaud others who do the same.

1. Sha'ul here speaks of the then-present; elsewhere, he puts this in the context of the End Times
 - a. **2Ti 3:1-5** - Moreover, understand this: in the *acharit-hayamim* will come trying times. People will be self-loving, money-loving, proud, arrogant, insulting, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, uncontrolled, brutal, hateful of good, traitorous, headstrong, swollen with conceit, loving pleasure rather than God, as they retain the outer form of religion but deny its power. Stay away from these people!
2. "They know well enough"
 - a. Lit. "are fully acquainted" (Gr. $\alpha\epsilon\pi\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$), an intimate, personal knowledge
3. "applaud others"
 - a. And said Rab in the name of R. Reuben b. Istrobili, *and some say that it was repeated in a Tannaite formulation as said R. Reuben b. Istrobili*, "A person comes under suspicion for something only if he did it, and if he didn't do the whole thing, then he did part of it, and if he didn't do part of it, then he thought about doing it, and if he didn't think about doing it, he saw other people doing it and enjoyed it." (b. Mo'ed Qatan 18b)

Chapter 2

Judgment and the Golden Rule

Rom 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, passing judgment; for when you judge someone else, you are passing judgment against yourself; since you who are judging do the same things he does.

Rom 2:2 We know that God's judgment lands impartially on those who do such things;

Rom 2:3 do you think that you, a mere man passing judgment on others who do such things, yet doing them yourself, will escape the judgment of God?

Rom 2:4 Or perhaps you despise the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience; because you don't realize that God's kindness is intended to lead you to turn from your sins.

1. "whoever you are"
 - a. Speaking to both Jew and Gentile
 - i. Jews – condemning Gentile for their pagan pasts, knowing Israel's own unfaithful past
 - ii. Gentiles – condemning anyone else, knowing their own sins (see below)
2. The Golden Rule
 - a. **Mat 7:1-5** - "Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. For the way you judge others is how you will be judged -- the measure with which you measure out will be used to measure to you. Why do you see the splinter in your brother's eye but not notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when you have the log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First, take the log out of your own eye; then you will see clearly, so that you can remove the splinter from your brother's eye!"
 - b. **Mat 7:12** - "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that sums up the teaching of the Torah and the Prophets."
 - i. The literal translation of Lev. 19:18, "*V'havta l'rayacha chamocho,*" literally means, "Love **to** your neighbor as yourself."
 - ii. When asked by a potential proselyte to sum up the Torah while standing on one foot, R. Hillel said, "'What is hateful to you, to your fellow don't do.' That's the entirety of the Torah; everything else is elaboration. So go, study." (Shabbat 31a)
 - c. **Rom 13:8-10** - Don't owe anyone anything - except to love one another; for whoever loves his fellow human being has fulfilled Torah. For the commandments, "Don't commit adultery," "Don't murder," "Don't steal," "Don't covet," and any others are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does not do harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fullness of Torah.
 - d. **Jas 2:8, 12-13** - If you truly attain the goal of Kingdom Torah, in conformity with the passage that says, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. . . Keep speaking and acting like people who will be judged by a Torah which gives freedom. For judgment will be without mercy toward one who doesn't show mercy; but mercy wins out over judgment.

3. The two key sins here are pride and a double-standard

Judgment According to Our Deeds

Rom 2:5 But by your stubbornness, by your unrepentant heart, you are storing up anger for yourself on the Day of Anger, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed;

Rom 2:6 for he will pay back each one according to his deeds.

Rom 2:7 To those who seek glory, honor and immortality by perseverance in doing good, he will pay back eternal life.

Rom 2:8 But to those who are self-seeking, who disobey the truth and obey evil, he will pay back wrath and anger.

Rom 2:9 Yes, he will pay back misery and anguish to every human being who does evil, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile;

Rom 2:10 but glory and honor and shalom to everyone who keeps doing what is good, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile.

Rom 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.

1. "the Day of Anger," or "... Wrath," aka the Day of the Lord
 - a. **Isa. 2:10-12** - Come into the rock, hide in the dust to escape the terror of ADONAI and the glory of his majesty. The proud looks of man will be humiliated; the arrogance of men will be bowed down; and when that day comes, **ADONAI alone will be exalted**. Yes, ADONAI-Tzva'ot has a day in store for all who are proud and lofty, for all who are lifted high to be humiliated . . .
 - b. **Zep 3:11** - When that day comes, you will not be ashamed of everything you have done, committing wrongs against me; for then I will remove from among you those of you who take joy in arrogance; you will no longer be full of pride on my holy mountain.
2. "pay back each according to his deeds"
 - a. The wicked are condemned on the basis of their deeds, their pride, and their hypocrisy
 - i. **2Ti 4:14** - Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm; the Lord will render to him according to his works. (Handed over to Satan in 1Ti 1:20.)
 - b. The righteous
 - i. are *saved* on the basis of their trust in God's Atonement, provided in the person of Yeshua HaMashiach,
 - ii. but are *rewarded* on the basis of their deeds.

The Parable of the Talents (Mat. 25:14ff)

1Co 3:11-15 - For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Yeshua the Messiah. Some will use gold, silver or precious stones in building on this foundation; while others will use wood, grass or straw. But each one's work will be shown for what it is; the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire - the fire will test the quality of each one's work. If the work someone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward; if it is burned up, he will have to bear the loss: he will still escape with his life, but it will be like escaping through a fire.

3. "to the Jew first, then to the Gentile"

a.

Within and Without the Torah

Rom 2:12 All who have sinned outside the framework of Torah will die outside the framework of Torah; and all who have sinned within the framework of Torah will be judged by Torah.

1. Those who do not have the Torah—and by extension, the Word of God—will be judged by the Golden Rule and the violation of their own sense of right and wrong.

a. We are judged by the light we are given.

2. An antithesis between the two

a. Those outside of the framework of the Torah "die"

i. **Gen 2:16-17** - ADONAI, God, gave the person this order: "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are not to eat from it, *because on the day that you eat from it, it will become certain that you will die.*"

1. Adam and Chavah *did* die that day—they were separated from God, their bodies succumbing to entropy.

ii. **Eph 2:11-13** - Therefore, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth - called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised - at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Isra'el. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise. *You were in this world without hope and without God.* But now, *you who were once far off* have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood.

b. Those within "are judged"

i. Torah provides an escape for the sinner who repents

1. Justification by trust in God's promises (Gen. 15:6)—the centerpiece of Sha'ul's soteriology

2. A way to “cover” (atone for) sins in the sacrificial system
 3. The promise of a complete redemption from sins in the Messiah
- ii. Torah also provides no redemption for he who sins “with a high hand,” intentionally, proudly, and flagrantly—“That person will be cut off from his people.” (Num. 15:30)
1. “Cut off” = removed from God’s covenant people Israel—not by man, but by the Holy One Himself.
 2. Israel as a whole had “sinned with a high hand,” falling repeatedly into idolatry throughout its history.
 - a. This will become the focus of chapters 9-11.
 - b. Here, this fact serves to prove Sha’ul’s point in this chapter and the next that the Jewish people can no more claim righteousness before God on their own merits than can the Gentiles.

Hearers and Doers

Rom 2:13 For it is not merely the hearers of Torah whom God considers righteous; rather, it is the doers of what Torah says who will be made righteous in God's sight.

1. It does no good to hear God’s Word—or even hear it and “believe”—if that hearing and believing does not result in the fruit of action.
 - a. **Jas 1:22-25** - Don't deceive yourselves by only hearing what the Word says, but do it! For whoever hears the Word but doesn't do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror, who looks at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But if a person looks closely into the perfect Torah, which gives freedom, and continues, becoming not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work it requires, then he will be blessed in what he does.
 - b. **Eph 2:8-10** For you have been delivered by grace through trusting, and even this is not your accomplishment but God's gift. You were not delivered by your own actions; therefore no one should boast. For we are of God's making, created in union with the Messiah Yeshua *for a life of good actions* already prepared by God for us to do.

The Torah On the Hearts of Even the Gentiles

Rom 2:14 For whenever Gentiles, who have no Torah, do naturally what the Torah requires, then these, even though they don't have Torah, for themselves are Torah!
 Rom 2:15 For their lives show that the conduct the Torah dictates is written in their hearts. Their consciences also bear witness to this, for their conflicting thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them

Rom 2:16 on a day when God passes judgment on people's inmost secrets. (According to the Good News as I proclaim it, he does this through the Messiah Yeshua.)

1. Two types of Gentiles

- a. The sinful pagan who refuses to acknowledge the true Creator, and as a result is given over to his/her dishonorable passions.
- b. The former pagan who has put his/her trust in Israel's King and has been grafted into the greater commonwealth of Israel (Rom. 11, Eph. 2) by being adopted under the New Covenant.

- i. **Jer 31:33** - "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says ADONAI: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

1. Notice that the Covenant is first of all with Israel, "to the Jew first," and that Gentiles are the beneficiaries of God's extended grace ("and also to the Gentiles")

2. How is Torah written on our hearts?

Eze 36:27 - I will put my Spirit inside you and cause you to live by my laws, respect my rulings and obey them.

- ii. This is why the fact that the Gentiles had received the Holy Breath, and its accompanying signs, was so radical and important (Acts 10-11).

1. The most important sign is not tongues, or prophecy, or miracles, but the evidence of a changed life, of doing the righteous deeds of the Torah even before receiving full instruction in it.

2. It was the expectation that the Spirit would complete what He had started in the lives of the Gentiles which prompted the *Beit Din's* decision in Acts 15 (cf. vv. 8ff).

2. "Conscience" = συνείδησις, from συνείδω ("to see completely"), can be translated "self-perception," or "the judgment of the mind," not exactly "guilt" as in the modern sense, but an awareness of right and wrong by which one judges one's self

- a. May be a "new" idea borrowed from Greek thought; only used one place in the LXX, Ecc. 10:20 – "Indeed, in your *consciousness* (inward thoughts/judgment) do not curse the king . . ."

- i. Ecclesiastes is thought to be an extremely late addition to the LXX, perhaps as late as 120 CE. (NETS 649)

- b. 90% of the people alive today and 99% of the people who have ever lived have ordered their life according to an honor/shame system rather than on personal conscience.
 - i. Honor/shame: What the group says is right is right.
 - 1. Do right, and people know it = honor
 - 2. Do wrong, and people know it = shame
 - 3. Do wrong, and people think you've done right = honor
 - 4. Do right, but people think you have done wrong = shame
 - ii. Guilt system: What I believe to be right is right
 - 1. Do right, and people know it = honor
 - 2. Do wrong, and people know it = guilt and shame
 - 3. Do wrong, and people think you've done right = guilt
 - 4. Do right, but people think you have done wrong = possible shame, but no guilt
- c. Development of a "guilty conscience" seems to mostly arise among the intellectual elite in philosophically-minded cultures—and in the Christian West
- d. The spread of an emphasis of the conscience/guilt in moral decisions is probably a reflection of the work of the Spirit in spreading a "universal honor/shame"—one cannot hide one's deeds from God, and therefore, one who knows Him is always shamed by his sins.

Hypocrisy in Israel

Rom 2:17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rest on Torah and boast about God

Rom 2:18 and know his will and give your approval to what is right, because you have been instructed from the Torah;

Rom 2:19 and if you have persuaded yourself that you are a guide to the blind, a light in the darkness,

Rom 2:20 an instructor for the spiritually unaware and a teacher of children, since in the Torah you have the embodiment of knowledge and truth;

Rom 2:21 then, you who teach others, don't you teach yourself? Preaching, "Thou shalt not steal," do you steal?

Rom 2:22 Saying, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? Detesting idols, do you commit idolatrous acts?

1. “You” in v. 17 is singular, elsewhere is inferred by conjugation – Sha’ul is making a challenge to the *individual*, not speaking to the nation as a whole
 - a. Substitute “Christian” for “Jew” and “Bible” for “Torah,” and his message is just as true for the latter nineteen centuries as it was for the first

2. Teaching without doing is worthless
 - a. **Luke 12:1-3** - Meanwhile, as a crowd in the tens of thousands gathered so closely as to trample each other down, Yeshua began to say to his *talmidim* first, "Guard yourselves from the *hametz* of the *P'rushim*, **by which I mean their hypocrisy**. There is nothing covered up that will not be uncovered, or hidden that will not become known. What you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed on the housetops.
 - i. Hypocrisy (ὁ πῶ κρισις) – literally, “to act” (as in a play), “to pretend”

 - b. Learning and teaching without doing is condemned in Judaism
 - i. “Shammai said, Make thy Torah an ordinance; **say little and do much**; and receive every man with a pleasant expression of countenance.” (Avot 1:15)

 - ii. “Rabbi Yishmael bar Rabbi Yose said: One who studies Torah in order to teach, is given the means to study and teach; and one who studies in order to practice, is given the means to study and to teach, to observe and to practice.” (Avot 4:6)

 - iii. “The commandment, ‘Thou shalt not bear (so *lit.*) the name of the Lord thy God in vain’ (Exod. xx. 7), was interpreted: ‘Do not put on the phylacteries, bearing God’s name, and then go and sin’ (Peskia, 111b).” (Cohen, *Talmud* 153)

 - iv. “In the hour when an individual is brought before the heavenly court for judgment, the person is asked: Did you conduct your [business] affairs honestly? Did you set aside regular time for Torah study? Did you work at having children? Did you look forward to the world’s redemption?” (Shabbat 31a)
 1. “Note that the first question asked in heaven is not ‘Did you believe in God?’ or ‘Did you observe all the rituals’ but ‘Were you honest in business?’ . . . The above passage unequivocally asserts that ethics is at Judaism’s core; God’s first concern is with a person’s decency.” (Telushkin, *Wisdom* 3)

 - v. “Said King Jannaeus to his daughter, ‘Do not fear the Pharisees nor those who are not Pharisees, but only the ones who are hypocrites, who appear like Pharisees, but whose deeds are the deeds of Zimri, while they seek the reward of Phineas [Num. 25:11ff.]’” (Sotah 22b)

1. The “seven types of Pharisees” passage immediately precedes this
3. A call for self-examination and self-honesty
 - a. Sha’ul’s list of commandments and their violations is not meant to be exhaustive – if someone answered, “Of course not!” he would just continue down the list of the 613 until he saw them squirm.
 - b. Even if we don’t commit the outward sin, a desire to commit it restrained only by the fear of being caught is still sin
 - i. “Thou shalt not covet . . .”
 - ii. **Mat 5:27f** - "You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that a man who even looks at a woman with the purpose of lusting after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." etc.
 - iii. **Psa 51:6** - Still, you want truth in the inner person; so make me know wisdom in my inmost heart.
 4. “commit idolatrous acts” – two possible meanings
 - a. lit. “rob temples”; ἱεροσυλεῖς, i.e., commit sacrilege on the level of robbing a temple
 - i. Profaning holy things was a great sin (cf. Lev. 22:14f)
 - b. Thayer’s: “thou who abhorrest idols and their contamination, doest yet not hesitate to plunder their shrines,” receiving benefit from idol-worship
 - i. The sin of Achan, who brought judgment on Israel when he plundered goods from the pagan Canaanites and brought them into the camp (Jos. 7).
 - ii. The sin of King Saul, who likewise plundered the Amalekites and took King Agag prisoner (likely to ransom him) instead of destroying everything as the Torah instructs (2Sa 15)

Slandering God

Rom 2:23 You who take such pride in Torah, do you, by disobeying the Torah, dishonor God? -

Rom 2:24 as it says in the Tanakh, "For it is because of you that God's name is blasphemed by the Goyim."

1. References two passages
 - a. **Isaiah 52:5** - So now, what should I do here," asks ADONAI, "since my people were carried off for nothing? Their oppressors are howling," says ADONAI, "and my name is always being insulted, daily."

- b. **Ezekiel 36:22** - Therefore tell the house of Isra'el that Adonai ELOHIM says this: 'I am not going to do this for your sake, house of Isra'el, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have been profaning among the nations where you went.'
2. Speaks of God's anger at having to use pagan peoples to punish Israel, giving them the chance to boast that their gods had conquered the true God.
 - a. Once again, the Church has no place to boast, having committed the same sins almost point-for-point

True Jewishness

Rom 2:25 For circumcision is indeed of value if you do what Torah says. But if you are a transgressor of Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision!

Rom 2:26 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the Torah, won't his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

Rom 2:27 Indeed, the man who is physically uncircumcised but obeys the Torah will stand as a judgment on you who have had a b'rit-milah and have Torah written out but violate it!

Rom 2:28 For the real Jew is not merely Jewish outwardly: true circumcision is not only external and physical.

Rom 2:29 On the contrary, the real Jew is one inwardly; and true circumcision is of the heart, spiritual not literal; so that his praise comes not from other people but from God.

1. Inclusion in the nation of Israel required keeping four positive mitzvot and several negative mitzvot – violation of these would result in “cutting off”
 - a. Positive
 - i. Circumcision (Gen 17:9ff)
 1. This was not just to be external, but a circumcision of the heart (Deu. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4)
 - ii. Keeping Passover (Exo 12:15ff, Num. 9:13)
 - iii. Keeping Sabbath (Exo 31:14) – this is keeping a covenant with God; v. 16)
 1. “More than Israel has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept Israel.” – Ahad HaAm (Asher Hirsch Ginsberg)
 - iv. Keeping Yom Kippur (Lev. 23:29)
 - b. Negative

- i. Consuming blood (Lev. 7:27, 17:10ff)
- ii. The “abomination” sins
 - 3. sexual sins (Lev. 18-20), including cross-dressing (Deu. 22:5)
 - 4. idolatry (Deu. 7:25) and human sacrifice (Lev. 18:21, Deu. 12:31)
 - 5. impure sacrifice to the Holy One (Deu. 17:1)
 - 6. occultism, astrology, séances (Deu. 18:9-12)
 - 7. dishonest business practices (Deu. 25:14-16)
- iii. Profaning the Lord’s sacrifice (Lev. 7:20ff, 19:7f)
- iv. Profaning the Lord’s implements, such as the incense, oil, sanctuary, or other implements (Exo. 30:22-38, Lev. 22:3, Num. 19:13)
- v. Offering sacrifices outside of God’s ordained location (Lev. 17:3ff)
- vi. Sinning “with a high hand” (Num. 15:30-31)

2. What Sha’ul is saying:

- a. If you are a transgressor of Torah, your Jewishness has become paganism! True Jewishness comes from within, from the Spirit, not merely as a benefit of birth – as Moshe himself taught!
 - b. Conversely, if a former Gentile/pagan keeps the righteous requirements of the Torah, he will be counted as good as a Jew – in fact, he will judge (rule over) the Jew who violates the Torah!
 - c. This does not mean that Christians are now the “true” Israel.
 - i. First, Sha’ul does not refer to “Christians” becoming Jews, though he does indicate that they are “annexed,” “grafted in,” or “adopted” into greater Israel.
 - 1. On the contrary, he works very hard to take away the stigma of being a “gentile” (a non-Jew, not a pagan)
 - ii. Secondly, it can hardly be argued that the Church, as a body, has kept the righteous requirements of the Torah!
3. As he will hammer home in the next section, *all* – Jew and Gentile alike – have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so *nobody* gets to boast. We all need the Salvation provided in God’s Anointed Salvation (Messiah Yeshua).

Chapter 3

The Advantage of the Jew

Rom 3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? What is the value of being circumcised?

Rom 3:2 Much in every way! In the first place, the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God.

1. What does Sha'ul mean by the advantage and value of being Jewish?
 - a. "advantage" = περισσῶν, "exceeding some number or measure or rank or deed . . . pre-eminence, superiority, advantage" (Thayer's).
 - b. "value" = ὄφελεια, "usefulness, benefit"
2. The advantages
 - a. "the very words of God" – the Jew, receiving the Scriptures in his own tongue, written by and to his own culture, has a natural advantage in understanding them.
 - b. From 9:4-5
 - i. God's children, even His firstborn son (Exo 4:22)
 1. the firstborn receives a double portion of the inheritance (Deu 21:17)
 2. becomes the leader of the family
 3. serves as the priest of the family
 - ii. Had had God's Sh'khinah among them – all other nations received angels over them instead (Deu. 32:8 [DSS, LXX, Targums], Dan. 10)
 - iii. Received God's covenants – even the Renewed Covenant was first and foremost with Israel (Jer. 31:30[31])
 - iv. The Torah – not only the words of God, but His guardian over Israel to keep her safe until she reaches her Master (3:25)
 - v. The Temple service – performed properly, would have kept the nation in right standing with God, and would have atoned not only for Israel, but the whole world
 - vi. The promises – God's unilateral promises of a Redeemer, the Resurrection, and the glory of the Age to Come were all given to and through Israel.
 - vii. The patriarchs – for whose sakes God does not forget His covenant promises to Israel regardless of her sins (cf. 11:28)

- viii. The Messiah – having come from the bloodline and land of Israel, will rule from Israel over the whole earth, making Jerusalem His capital.
- c. Can more easily be grafted back into their own tree than a “wild branch,” a pagan Gentile, can be grafted in (Rom. 11:24)

3. The Caveats

- a. Salvation is nowhere on the list! Jew and Gentile are both saved by God’s loving grace, not by special position.
- b. With great light comes great responsibility – God’s judgment, like His grace, comes first to the Jew and only then to the Gentile
- c. The firstborn son is not loved *more* than the other children by a just father; he does, however, bear the greatest burden in emulating his father and leading the family.

4. The Christian Response

- a. Commentators will readily admit to the advantage of the Jews – in the past – of having received the Scriptures, though few wish to acknowledge the advantage in understanding them.
 - i. Partially justified – there *is* a veil over the eyes of those who do not know Yeshua:
 - 1. **Isa 6:9f** - He said, "Go and tell this people: 'Yes, you hear, but you don't understand. You certainly see, but you don't get the point!' Make the heart of this people [sluggish with] fat, stop up their ears, and shut their eyes. Otherwise, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, then understanding with their hearts, they might repent and be healed!"
 - 2. **Rom 11:25** - It is that stoniness, to a degree, has come upon Isra'el, until the Gentile world enters in its fullness . . .
 - 3. **2Co 3:12-18** - Therefore, with a hope like this, we are very open - unlike Moshe, who put a veil over his face, so that the people of Isra'el would not see the fading brightness come to an end. What is more, their minds were made stonelike; for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled, because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away. Yes, till today, whenever Moshe is read, a veil lies over their heart. "But," [says the Torah,] "whenever someone turns to ADONAI, the veil is taken away." (cf. Exo. 34:34) Now, "ADONAI" in this text means the Spirit. And where the Spirit of ADONAI is, there is freedom. So all of us, with faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and we are being changed into his very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by ADONAI the Spirit.

- a. Moshe being veiled refers to a time when he came down from Mt. Sinai and the brightness of the Sh'khinah could be seen reflected in his face. The people could not bear to look at such glory, so he veiled himself among the people, but took off his veil when turning to speak with the Holy One face-to-face.
 - b. This veil did not keep the people from understanding his words, given in their tongue and idioms – just from seeing the full glory that the Holy One had given him.
 - c. Sha'ul is applying this as follows:
 - i. This time, it's not the messenger that is veiled, but the hearts of some of the hearers.
 - ii. Therefore, they cannot see the true glory of the Torah, which is Yeshua Himself (Rom. 10:4)
 - iii. However, when they do turn to God in repentance, the veil is taken away and the full glory of the Torah can be seen.
 - iv. This does not prevent them from understanding the words of the Torah – just from seeing a particular glory that it holds.
 - d. Stern notes, “Surprisingly, relatively few Jewish writers on the New Testament have voiced much objection to these verses. The only Jewish responses I have personally experienced have been either direct denial or amused but ironic acceptance – ‘If it’s a veil that keeps us from seeing Jesus, we can live with that.’ Pitiful!” (*Commentary* 500)
- b. Later, in Rom. 3:9, Sha'ul writes, “So are we Jews better off? **Not entirely**; for I have already made the charge that all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, are controlled by sin.”
- i. “not entirely” = οὐ πᾶν τῶς, which does lit. translate as “not entirely”
 - ii. Routinely mistranslated and therefore misinterpreted:
 - 1. “No, in no wise” – KJV
 - 2. “Not at all” – NASB, ESV, NIV, Vulgate
 - 3. Bruce Metzger writes in *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, “The unexpected sequence . . . of οὐ πᾶν τῶς (which ought to mean ‘not entirely,’ but which in the context must mean ‘not at all’) accounts for the declaration of the

words in some witnesses . . . and their replacement by *perisson* in others. . . .” (quoted by Stern, *Comm.* 341f)

- a. As Stern (*ibid.*) notes, Metzger is showing his theological bias here, ignoring the plain meaning of the Greek words because they do not agree with his presuppositions.
 - b. This is why we must make a distinction between *translation* and *interpretation*.
- iii. This means that while the Jew has some natural advantage in knowing God, he is not intrinsically better off in salvation. Indeed, his advantageous position makes him *more* liable for judgment and therefore *more* in need of God’s grace.

God True When Every Man is a Liar

Rom 3:3 If some of them were unfaithful, so what? Does their faithlessness cancel God’s faithfulness?

Rom 3:4 Heaven forbid! God would be true even if everyone were a liar! - as the Tanakh says, "so that you, God, may be proved right in your words and win the verdict when you are put on trial." (Psa 51:4, LXX)

1. “Heaven forbid!”
 - a. Gr. μή γέ νοῦτο, “Let it not be!”
 - b. Probably a translation of “Chalilah! . . . Hebrew’s most intense wish for negation; therefore KJV’s ‘God forbid!’ conveys the sense well.” (Stern, *Commentary* 341)
2. Psalm 51 was composed by David in confessing and repenting from the sin of Bathsheba and Uriah (2Sa 11f).
 - a. David’s unfaithfulness did not remove God’s faithfulness in keeping His covenant with David that his house would endure forever on the throne of Israel (2Sa 7:11ff).
 - b. However, that sin did result in a temporary disruption of David’s throne when his rebellious son Abimelech led a successful coup which drove David into exile.
 - c. In the same way, Israel’s faithlessness in not receiving Yeshua in His First Coming or carrying out her mission to be a priestly nation among the nations put God’s promises on hold, and even resulted in exile, but just as God was faithful to David, so He is faithful to David’s kingdom through Ben David.
 - i. **Psa 51:18f** - In your good pleasure, make Tziyon prosper; rebuild the walls of Yerushalayim. Then you will delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then they will offer bulls on your altar.

Sin Must Be Punished Regardless of Its End Result

Rom 3:5 Now if our unrighteousness highlights God's righteousness, what should we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict his anger on us? (I am speaking here the way people commonly do.)

Rom 3:6 Heaven forbid! Else, how could God judge the world?

Rom 3:7 "But," you say, "if, through my lie, God's truth is enhanced and brings him greater glory, why am I still judged merely for being a sinner?"

Rom 3:8 Indeed! Why not say (as some people slander us by claiming we do say), "Let us do evil, so that good may come of it"? Against them the judgment is a just one!

1. Even though one's sin may bring glory to God by His use of that sin to bring about good, we are still responsible for our decisions.
 - a. The absurdity of sinning to do good:
 - i. Do we commend those who worshipped the golden calf?
 - ii. Do we applaud Judas?
 - iii. Do we give respect to Haman or Hitler because their failure to destroy the Jews showed God's glory?

Nevertheless, the Jew Still Needs Salvation

Rom 3:9 So are we Jews better off? Not entirely; for I have already made the charge that all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, are controlled by sin.

Rom 3:10 As the Tanakh puts it, "There is no one righteous, not even one! No one understands,

Rom 3:11 no one seeks God,

Rom 3:12 all have turned away and at the same time become useless; there is no one who shows kindness, not a single one!

Rom 3:13 "Their throats are open graves, they use their tongues to deceive. Vipers' venom is under their lips.

Rom 3:14 Their mouths are full of curses and bitterness.

Rom 3:15 "Their feet rush to shed blood,

Rom 3:16 in their ways are ruin and misery,

Rom 3:17 and the way of shalom they do not know.

Rom 3:18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Rom 3:19 Moreover, we know that whatever the Torah says, it says to those living within the framework of the Torah, in order that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world be shown to deserve God's adverse judgment.

Rom 3:20 For in his sight no one alive will be considered righteous on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah

commands, because what Torah really does is show people how sinful they are.

1. “There is no one righteous” – Psa. 14:1-3 and 53:1-3, which are very parallel:

- a. **Psa 14:** For the leader. By David: Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God. They deal corruptly, their deeds are vile, not one does what is right.

From heaven ADONAI observes humankind to see if anyone has understanding, if anyone seeks God. But all turn aside, all alike are corrupt; no one does what is right, not a single one.

Don't they ever learn, all those evildoers, who eat up my people as if eating bread and never call on ADONAI? There they are, utterly terrified; for God is with those who are righteous. You may mock the plans of the poor, but their refuge is ADONAI.

How I wish Isra'el's salvation (*y'shuat Yisrael*) would come out of Tziyon! When ADONAI restores his people's fortunes, Ya'akov will rejoice, Isra'el will be glad!

- b. This passage sets the tone for many of those which are cited afterwards—since Psalms 14 and 53 indict all “humankind,” the references to the wicked that follow may likewise be applied to “all humankind.”

2. “Their throats are open graves” – Psa. 5:9

- a. Here David is speaking of his enemies, in contrast to he himself, of whom he says, “But I can enter your house **because of your great grace and love**; I will bow down toward your holy temple in reverence for you.” (v. 7)
- b. The particular sin here, as in the next citations, is slander—one of particular poignancy to Sha’ul and the Ekklesia, since they were often the victims of it (cf. Rom. 3:8).

3. “Viper’s venom” – Psa. 140:3

- a. Again, David is speaking of the evil schemes of the wicked who are trying to destroy him—in particular, employing slander—and appealing to the Holy One for deliverance and their destruction.

4. “curses and bitterness” – Psa. 10:7

- a. A continuation of the previous thought, also ties to the fool of Psa. 14 and 53 who says, “There is no God” (cf. v. 4).

5. “feet swift to shed blood” – Isa. 59:7f

- a. Quotes from the prophet’s denouncement of Israel as a whole misusing the fast of Yom Kippur (cf. 58:5) while still actively committing the very sins Yom Kippur was supposed to atone for.

6. “no fear of God” – Psa. 36:1
 - a. This psalm contrasts the wicked’s actions with the righteousness of God, who shelters those who know Him “in the shadow of [His] wings” (vv. 7, 10).
7. “what the Torah says”
 - a. Sha’ul is here speaking of “Torah” in the sense of the whole of the Tanakh.
 - b. His point is that the very Scriptures that Jews claim to make them enlightened (cf. 2:17ff) also tell them that there is no one who keeps them righteously.
 - c. Therefore, the Scriptures do not reveal ourselves to be righteous, but to be sinners in need of God’s grace.
8. “it says to those living within the framework of the Torah,”
 - a. lit. “in the law” (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ), not “under the law” as it is rendered in the KJV
 - b. Those who live within the Torah’s framework rather than those who pervert the Torah into a legalistic system for earning God’s favor (see 6:14n)
9. “knowledge of sin”
 - a. **Psa 19:7-11** - The Torah of ADONAI is perfect, restoring the inner person. The instruction of ADONAI is sure, making wise the thoughtless. The precepts of ADONAI are right, rejoicing the heart. The mitzvah of ADONAI is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of ADONAI is clean, enduring forever. The rulings of ADONAI are true, they are righteous altogether, more desirable than gold, than much fine gold, also sweeter than honey or drippings from the honeycomb. Through them your servant is warned; in obeying them there is great reward.
 - i. “restoring the inner person” is *m’shivat nephesh* (משיבת נפש), lit. “bringing repentance to the soul/life”

Righteousness Apart From the Law?

Rom 3:21 But now, quite apart from Torah, God's way of making people righteous in his sight has been made clear - although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well -

Rom 3:22 and it is a righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah, to all who continue trusting. For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile,

Rom 3:23 since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise.

Rom 3:24 By God's grace, without earning it, all are granted the status of being considered righteous before him, through the act redeeming us from our enslavement to sin that was accomplished by the Messiah Yeshua.

Rom 3:25 God put Yeshua forward as the *kapparah* for sin through his faithfulness in respect to his bloody sacrificial death. This vindicated God's righteousness; because, in his forbearance, he had passed over [with neither punishment nor remission] the sins people had committed in the past;

Rom 3:26 and it vindicates his righteousness in the present age by showing that he is righteous himself and is also the one who makes people righteous on the ground of Yeshua's faithfulness.

1. “apart from the Torah” = χωρὶς νόμου,
 - a. not ἀνόμου (“lawless” or “wicked”)
 - b. that is, not “without the law” (KJV), but “outside of the Torah . . . although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well”
 - c. But isn't Yeshua the Torah?
 - i. Sha'ul here refers to “Torah” as the written text, a system of commandments woven into Israel's history.
 - ii. Yeshua is the True Torah of which the Written is only the type – an accurate depiction of God's righteousness and mercy, but still only the picture rather than the reality.
 - d. Sha'ul's point is that the righteousness of the written Torah can never be obtained, for we are all sinful, so God imparted to us a righteousness outside of the written text in the Person of Yeshua.
2. “without earning it”
 - a. As previously noted, *pistis* can never earn the *charis* that inspired it – it is the proper response in receiving the *charis*

This has always been understood and taught in Judaism!

- i. The *Avinu Malkheyenu* concludes, “Be merciful to us, for we have with us no righteousness or loving-kindness, be merciful to us we pray.”
- ii. The *Amidah*
 1. 6th Benediction – “Forgive us Father, for we have sinned, Pardon us, our King, for we have transgressed, For Thou art a pardoner and a forgiver. Blessed art Thou, Lord, Gracious One who forgives abundantly.
 2. 13th Benediction – “Grant a good reward to all who sincerely trust in Thy Name; Place our lot with them forever and let us not be shamed, For in Thee do we trust.”

- iii. The preliminary morning prayers: “Sovereign of all worlds! Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our supplications before You, but because of Your abundant mercies.”
 - iv. See also the quote in 4.a.vi.1 below
- 3. “a righteousness that comes from God”
 - a. lit. “a righteousness of God” or “God’s righteousness” – that is, God’s own righteousness, not just His way of providing it to us, is revealed in the sacrifice of the Lamb.
 - i. **Jer 23:5f** - "The days are coming," says ADONAI, “when I will raise a righteous Branch for David. He will reign as king and succeed, he will do what is just and right in the land. In his days Y'hudah will be saved, Isra'el will live in safety, and the name given to him will be *ADONAI Tzidkenu* [ADONAI Our Righteousness].”
- 4. “redeeming us from our enslavement to sin”
 - a. A key point in chapter 6 – better to discuss there?
 - b. Here Sha’ul calls to mind Israel’s redemption from enslavement to Egypt, which came in several distinct stages:
 - i. God sent a messenger (Moshe/Yeshua) to take out His people
 - ii. He went to war with the gods of Egypt/with the unclean spirits in Israel
 - iii. Israel is finally freed from slavery and protected from the sentence of death by the blood of the Passover Lamb.
 - iv. The redeemed leave Egypt/the ways of this world
 - v. **1Co 10:1-4** - For, brothers, I don't want you to miss the significance of what happened to our fathers. All of them were guided by the pillar of cloud, and they all passed through the sea, and in connection with the cloud and with the sea they all immersed themselves into Moshe, also they all ate the same food from the Spirit, and they all drank the same drink from the Spirit - for they drank from a Spirit-sent Rock which followed them, and that Rock was the Messiah.
 - vi. Only then did Israel come to Mt. Sinai and receive the Torah – **Israel received redemption by trusting God in the course of that redemption, not by keeping a Torah that they hadn’t even received yet!**
 - 1. The Midrash on Psalm 44:1 – “When the children of Israel went out from Egypt, they could not offer any works of their hands whereby they might be redeemed. And so, it was not because of the works of their fathers, nor was it because of their own works, that the sea was divided before them; rather, it was

only so that God might make a name for Himself in the world.”
(Stern, *Comm.* 347)

c. On slavery to sin vs. slavery to God:

- i. **Gal 4:3-5** - So it is with us - when we were "children" we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe; but when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth his Son. He was born from a woman, born into a culture in which legalistic perversion of the Torah was the norm, so that he might redeem those in subjection to this legalism and thus enable us to be made God's sons.
- ii. **1Pe 2:16** - Submit as people who are free, but not letting your freedom serve as an excuse for evil; rather, submit as God's slaves.
- iii. **2Pe 2:19** – They [the false teachers] promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for a person is slave to whatever has defeated him.
- iv. **1Co 7:22** - For a person who was a slave when he was called is the Lord's freedman; likewise, someone who was a free man when he was called is a slave of the Messiah.
- v. The *Sh'liachim* (Emissaries) frequently referred to themselves as “slaves” to Messiah Yeshua (Rom. 1:1 *et al.*, 2Pe 1:1, Jude 1:1).
 1. In Jewish culture, an indentured servant who was set free on the seventh year had the option of staying with his master if he chose (Exo. 21:1-6).
- vi. The subject of freewill slavery will be a key point in Rom. 6

5. “the *kapparah*” – atonement (Gr. ἵλαστική ριον)

- a. The Gr. word could refer to both a sacrificial victim and a *monument* built to placate Diety
- b. A reference to the Mercy Seat of the Ark (as in Heb. 9:5)?
 - i. The Mercy Seat, representing God’s throne between the *kheruvim*,
 1. God would speak to Israel from “between the *kheruvim*” (Exo. 25:22)
 - ii. was where the blood of the Yom Kippur sacrifice was sprinkled to atone for the sins of Israel
 1. both on it and before it (Lev. 16:14), exactly where Yeshua’s hands and feet would be if He sat upon it.
 - iii. Without Yeshua,

1. the Mercy Seat would just be so much gold,
2. we would have no forgiveness of sins,
3. and we could not keep the Feasts today, because the requisite priestly service would not be fulfilled.

Neither Boasting in the Torah Nor Abolishing It

Rom 3:27 So what room is left for boasting? None at all! What kind of Torah excludes it? One that has to do with legalistic observance of rules? No, rather, a Torah that has to do with trusting.

Rom 3:28 Therefore, we hold the view that a person comes to be considered righteous by God on the ground of trusting, which has nothing to do with legalistic observance of Torah commands.

Rom 3:29 Or is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is indeed the God of the Gentiles;

Rom 3:30 because, as you will admit, God is one. Therefore, he will consider righteous the circumcised on the ground of trusting and the uncircumcised through that same trusting.

Rom 3:31 Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah.

1. Boasting excluded
 - a. The Torah convicts all of sin, so no one can boast in their ability to keep it.
 - b. The Torah also condemns pride, which comes with boasting.
 - c. The righteousness of God has not been revealed in men keeping His Torah, but in one man, Yeshua, keeping His Torah and then dying for those who couldn't.
2. "What kind of Torah excludes it?"
 - a. Two options for how to read the Torah:
 - i. As a set of rules that one can keep to earn God's favor, thus enabling one to boast over those who don't keep it up to your level.
 - ii. As a set of teachings that one learns and tries to obey, not to earn favor with God, but as a proper response of *pistis* to His *charis*.
 - b. Since the former allows boasting which is forbidden by the Torah, the latter must be the proper response.

- c. Therefore, Sha'ul argues, one is considered righteous who trusts God and out of that trust and gratitude for His gift of atonement and salvation is loyal and faithful to Him.

3. God of Jew and Gentile alike

- a. Since both are saved by trust in and faithfulness towards God, one cannot say that only Jews are saved or that somehow Jews are *more* saved.
- b. “God is one” – *Adonai Echad*, the central statement of faith for all Judaism. There is not a separate God for the Gentiles, but One God who created Jew and Gentile alike, and who loves and saves Jew and Gentile alike.
- c. **Gal 3:28** - . . . there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua, you are all one.
 - i. Christians tend to treat this passage as if it said, “there is no more Jew” only.
 - ii. “neither male nor female”
 - 1. Is the husband no longer head of the household?
 - 2. Is homosexuality okay?
 - 3. Of course not!
 - iii. It is simply saying that there is no barrier between these groups, but one Body, all saved by trust in Yeshua.
 - iv. It does not mean that all distinctions in callings and roles have passed away. The same is true of Sha'ul's argument here in Romans.
- d. This may seem obvious to us today, but in the 1st Century, it was a radical idea.
 - i. Acts 10-14 chronicle the “growing pains” of having so many Gentiles seeking entrance into the Kingdom of God.
 - 1. Kefa was actually taken to task for associating with Cornelius, and his hearers were astounded that the Gentiles were given the Spirit too!

4. Abolishing vs. confirming the Torah

- a. **Mat 5:17-19** - "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah -- not until everything that must happen has happened. So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will

be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

- i. To abolish meant to annul, disobey, or teach falsely.
- ii. To fulfill meant to keep, obey, and teach correctly.
- iii. R. Yonatan says, “Whoever keeps the Torah when poor will in the end keep it in wealth. And whoever treats the Torah as nothing (lit. “abolishes the Torah”) when he is wealthy in the end will treat it as nothing in poverty.” (Avot 4:11)

Chapter 4

The Faith of the Fathers

Rom 4:1 Then what should we say Avraham, our forefather, obtained by his own efforts?

Rom 4:2 For if Avraham came to be considered righteous by God because of legalistic observances, then he has something to boast about. But this is not how it is before God!

Rom 4:3 For what does the Tanakh say? "Avraham put his trust in God, and it was credited to his account as righteousness." (Gen. 15:6)

1. “our forefather”
 - a. In Jewish thought, no son could be held above his father.
 - i. **Heb 7:1-2, 9-10** - This Malki-Tzedek, king of Shalem, a cohen of God Ha'Elyon, met Avraham on his way back from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; also Avraham gave him a tenth of everything. . . . One might go even further and say that Levi, who himself receives tenths, paid a tenth through Avraham; inasmuch as he was still in his ancestor Avraham's body when Malki-Tzedek met him.
 - ii. “**And his brothers also went and fell before him**” (Gen. 50:12): R. Said R. Benjamin bar Yefet said R. Eleazar: *That is what people say: A fox in his time, bow to him. A fox? What is his shortcoming, relative to his brothers? Rather, if it was said, it was said in this way: “And Israel bowed at the head of the bed”* (Gen. 47:31) — Said R. Benjamin bar Yefet said R. Eleazar: “*A fox in his time, bow to him.*” (b. Megillah 16b)
 1. In other words, the epithet “a fox”—not a complimentary term—was applied to Joseph because he allowed his father to bow to him, scandalizing the rabbis.
 - iii. **Mat 22:41-46** - Then, turning to the assembled *P'rushim*, Yeshua put a *sh'eilah* to them: "Tell me your view concerning the Messiah: whose son is he?" They said to him, "David's." "Then how is it," he asked

them, "that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord,' when he says, 'ADONAI said to my Lord, "Sit here at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If David thus calls him 'Lord,' how is he his son?" No one could think of anything to say in reply; and from that day on, no one dared put to him another *sh'eilah*.

1. In the same way, Yeshua here points to Messiah's pre-existence and pre-eminence over David, since no father would normally call his son "my Lord."
 - b. Therefore, Sha'ul's reasoning goes, those who are descended from Abraham could certainly not expect to obtain God's favor by their own works unless the Patriarch had done so.
2. "by his own efforts"
 - a. Abraham was indeed praised by God for his works: "All this is because Avraham heeded what I said and did what I told him to do -he followed my mitzvot, my regulations and my teachings." (Gen. 26:5)
 - b. This praise, however, was delivered to his son many decades after Abraham was first declared righteous on the basis of trusting God.
 - c. Therefore, true obedience to God is born from trusting God's promises— God's promises are not received by virtue of our obedience.
3. "boast"
 - a. Forbidden by Torah, as seen in the previous section.
4. "believed God"
 - a. "In the *'olam haba* Israel will sing a new song, as it is said, 'Sing unto *Adonai* a new song, for he has done marvelous things' (Psa. 98:1). By whose merit will they do so? By the merit of Avraham, because he trusted in the Holy One, blessed be he, as it is written, 'And he trusted in *Adonai*.'" (Sh'mot Rabbah 23:5)
 - i. Two teachings here:
 1. Trusting the Holy One is counted as merit – absolutely true!
 2. Abraham's merit descends to his children-only partially true.
 - a. While Abraham's trust secured Israel's national place (Rom. 11:28),
 - b. but it cannot save the individual from judgment, just as Noah's trust did not declare Abraham righteous.

Wages vs. a Gift

Rom 4:4 Now the account of someone who is working is credited not on the ground of grace but on the ground of what is owed him.

Rom 4:5 However, in the case of one who is not working but rather is trusting in him who makes ungodly people righteous, his trust is credited to him as righteousness.

1. “not on the ground of grace”
 - a. Despite what Christianity has often taught, Judaism has never been confused about the need for God’s grace (cf. 3:21ff & note).
 - b. Sha’ul makes an appeal to this common knowledge in his argument:
 - i. If we obtain right standing with God by our works, then why do we pray for His grace? Should we not rather approach Him to ask for our due recompense.
 - ii. Yet that is not what Judaism does – the liturgy is continually focused on God’s unmerited favor.
2. “not working” - μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ
 - a. This is not saying that we should not do good “works”
 - i. **Rom 2:9-10** - Yes, he will pay back misery and anguish to every human being who does evil, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile; but glory and honor and shalom to everyone who keeps doing (ἐργαζομένῳ, “works”) what is good, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile.
 - b. Rather, he is trying to change our attitude about doing good works.
 - i. We aren’t doing good works as a labor that we are being “paid” God’s grace for.
 - ii. Rather, we are responding to a great Gift that we can never earn and never repay with our own small gift back—our good works, so that men will give glory to God when they see them (Mat. 5:16)—out of love, gratitude, and loyalty to the Giver.
 - c. “Works” elsewhere in Scripture:
 - i. **Parable of the Talents (Mat 25:16)** - The one who had received five talents immediately went out, invested it (lit. “worked it”) and earned another five.
 1. Had his master not given him the talents, he would have had no way to earn more.

2. He was not investing them as his own money to earn his own fortune through, but being a good steward for his master: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"
 - ii. **Joh 3:21** - But everyone who does what is true comes to the light, so that all may see that his actions ("works") are accomplished **through God**.
 - iii. **Joh 6:28f** - So they said to him, "What should we do in order to perform the works of God?" Yeshua answered, "Here's what the work of God is: to trust in the one he sent!"

The Faith of David

Rom 4:6 In the same way, the blessing which David pronounces is on those whom God credits with righteousness apart from legalistic observances:
 Rom 4:7 "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered over;
 Rom 4:8 Blessed is the man whose sin ADONAI will not reckon against his account." (Psa. 32:1)

1. Here the same point is made, this time citing Israel's greatest (until Yeshua) king.
 - a. David was called a man after God's own heart (1Sa 13:14, Acts 13:22)
 - b. And yet he was not a perfect man, committing sins that resulted in grievous punishments on all Israel.
 - c. He put his trust not in his own character, but in God's; not in his own works, but in God's grace and mercy.

The Seal of Circumcision

Rom 4:9 Now is this blessing for the circumcised only? Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For we say that Avraham's trust was credited to his account as righteousness;
 Rom 4:10 but what state was he in when it was so credited - circumcision or uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision!
 Rom 4:11 In fact, he received circumcision as a sign, as a seal of the righteousness he had been credited with on the ground of the trust he had while he was still uncircumcised. This happened so that he could be the father of every uncircumcised person who trusts and thus has righteousness credited to him,
 Rom 4:12 and at the same time be the father of every circumcised person who not only has had a *b'rit-milah*, but also follows in the footsteps of the trust which Avraham *avinu* had when he was still uncircumcised.

1. Circumcision

a. Background

- i. Practiced by the Egyptians in the 1st Century, as well as the Syrians and the Arabs (Philo, *The Special Laws I* 1:5; *Epistle of Barnabas* ix)
- ii. Nevertheless, was known as the “well-known bodily sign” of the Jews (Tertullian, *Apology* xxi)
- iii. It remained important among Jewish followers of Yeshua, who were known for their zeal for the Torah (Acts 7:8, 21:20-21).
- iv. It was considered great for various reasons (m. Nedarim 3:11):
 1. Many covenants (numbered 13 in the Mishnah) were given by it – in fact, the rabbis considered “circumcision” and “covenant” (both translations of *b'rit*) to be one and the same.
 2. It overrides the Sabbath (cf. John 7:22).
 3. It was not set aside even for a moment even for Moses (cf. Exo. 4:24f)
 4. It overrides prohibitions in dealing with *tzararat*
 5. Abraham was only called perfect when God called him to circumcise (cf. Gen. 17:1)
 6. It was supposed that the world was made for the sake of circumcision, based on a play-on-words in Jer. 33:25
- v. Interestingly, there is serious discussion in the Talmud (Abodah Zarah 26b ff) about whether a Gentile could perform a circumcision, and under what circumstances—suggesting that the issue had come up! R. Meir and R. Judah, for example, allowed it if there was no suitable Israelite physician. (There is a debate about which one allowed the Samaritan over a Gentile.)

b. False teachings regarding

i. Jewish

1. Necessary (meaning, Jewishness) for salvation (Acts 15:1)
2. “In the Hereafter Abraham will sit at the entrance of Gehinnom and will not allow any circumcised Israelite to descend into it. As for those who sinned unduly, what does he do to them? He removes the foreskin from children who died before circumcision, places it upon them and sends them down to Gehinnom.” (Gen. R. 48:8, quoted by Cohen, *Talmud* 381)

ii. Christian

1. Was given because of the deception or hostility of an evil angel, which it allegedly offered some protection against (*Barnabas*, *ibid*; Origen, *Against Celsus* V, ch. xlviii)
 2. “Therefore, for all those who had been delivered from the yoke of slavery, he would earnestly have to obliterate circumcision, the very mark of slavery.” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* V, ch. 4)
 3. Lactantius called it “plainly irrational.” (*Divine Institutes* IV, ch. xvii)
- c. Circumcision was not just to be external, but a circumcision of the heart (Deu. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4) – in other words, we are to internalize the external rite (see “True Jewishness” above)
- d. Symbolism
- i. As a sign
 1. A permanent mark cut on the most sensitive, most deeply treasured, and most hidden part of the male anatomy.
 2. “[T]here is the resemblance of the part that is circumcised to the heart; for both parts are prepared for the sake of generation; for the breath contained within the heart is generative of thoughts, and the generative organ itself is productive of living beings. Therefore, the men of old thought it right to make the evident and visible organ, by which the objects of the outward senses are generated, resemble that invisible and superior part, by means of which ideas are formed.” (Philo, *Special Laws*, I, ch. i.6)
 - a. Unlike Christian commentators, who took the knowledge of a symbol to negate the physical rite, Philo rebuked those who took the knowledge of the reason behind a *mitzvah* to negate the performance of it.
 - ii. As a seal
 1. Gr. σφραγίς, the impression made by a signet-ring, which indicated and authenticated the author of a document, certifying that it was written by his authority, even if a scribe was employed.
 - a. Sha’ul speaks of the Corinthian Assembly as being the seal of his apostleship—that is, the proof that his work was really done under God’s authority (1Co. 9:2).
 - b. Despite the existence of false teachers, the firm foundation of the Lord’s work stands upon two seals (2Ti. 2:19):

- i. The Holy One knows who is truly His,
 - ii. and those who are truly His depart from iniquity.
 - 2. Abraham's circumcision served as a sign and a seal that he and his posterity belonged to the Eternal One.
- iii. In the Renewed Covenant
 - 1. **Col 2:11-13** - Also it was in union with him that you were circumcised with a circumcision not done by human hands, but accomplished by stripping away the old nature's control over the body. In this circumcision done by the Messiah, you were buried along with him by being immersed; and in union with him, you were also raised up along with him by God's faithfulness that worked when he raised Yeshua from the dead. You were dead because of your sins, that is, because of your "foreskin," your old nature. But God made you alive along with the Messiah by forgiving you all your sins.
 - a. Sha'ul's point
 - i. was not to annul physical circumcision for Abraham's physical descendants,
 - ii. but to emphasize the spiritual circumcision that Jew and Gentile alike shared as Abraham's spiritual descendants.

2. Abraham's fatherhood

- a. His first call was to be the father of a great nation (Gen. 12:2)
- b. But it was in connection with the covenant of circumcision that he was told that he would be the father of not just one, but many nations (Gen. 17:4).

Seed vs. Seeds

Rom 4:13 For the promise to Avraham and his seed that he would inherit the world did not come through legalism but through the righteousness that trust produces.

Rom 4:14 For if the heirs are produced by legalism, then trust is pointless and the promise worthless.

- 1. Seed = singular or plural?
 - a. **Gal 3:16** - Now the promises were made to Avraham and to his seed. It doesn't say, "and to seeds," as if to many; on the contrary, it speaks of one - "and to your seed" - and this "one" is the Messiah.
 - i. In Hebrew, as in English, "seed" (*zarah*, זרע) is a collective noun, having the same form whether it is singular or plural.

- b. Places where “seed” must be plural
 - i. Here in Romans, “seed” is taken in the plural, parallel to “heirs”
 - ii. **Gen 15:13, 18** - ADONAI said to Avram, "Know this for certain: your descendants will be foreigners in a land that is not theirs. They will be slaves and held in oppression there four hundred years. . . . That day ADONAI made a covenant with Avram: "I have given this land to your descendants - from the Vadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River -
 - iii. **Gen 22:17-18** - I will most certainly bless you; and I will most certainly increase your descendants to as many as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants will possess the cities of their enemies, and by your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed - because you obeyed my order."
- c. Both are true – we are seed and heirs to Abraham through his One Seed, Messiah

No Law?

Rom 4:15 For what law brings is punishment. But where there is no law, there is also no violation.

Rom 4:16 The reason the promise is based on trusting is so that it may come as God's free gift, a promise that can be relied on by all the seed, not only those who live within the framework of the Torah, but also those with the kind of trust Avraham had - Avraham avinu for all of us.

- 1. Stern translates *nomos* here as “law” rather than “Torah” as he does elsewhere
 - a. “[T]o me this seems to be a statement about law in general rather than about the *Torah* in particular; although moral behavior is absolute, unless a statute makes a particular act illegal and punishable, there is no violation and the act goes unpunished.” (Stern, *Commentary* 355)
 - b. The point is not that the Torah is done away with to remove wrath, but
 - i. that since Abraham’s promise was given before the statutes of the Torah,
 - ii. no later violation of the Torah could annul it,
 - iii. any more than later obedience to the Torah could earn it.
 - iv. Neither could rejection of the Messiah cause Israel to lose her promises.
 - c. God’s pattern of redemption is the same (cf. Noah, Abraham, Israel, the Ekklesia; Perez, *Romans* 81):
 - i. First, He establishes a relationship

- ii. Second, He redeems the person(s)
 - iii. Third, He establishes the terms of the covenant
- 2. This free gift is given freely to all who follow Abraham's example
 - a. The contrast:
 - i. "who live within the framework of the Torah" – lit. "those who are of/from the Law"; that is, the Jewish believers, those raised from birth in the Torah
 - 1. Sha'ul does not contrast these with those "of faith," but puts them alongside them.
 - 2. "Those who are of the Torah" are distinct from "those who are of the *works* of the Law" (cf. Gal. 3:10).
 - a. There is a difference between coming from a place of Torah and trying to win the gift by legalistic observance of it.
 - ii. "those with the kind of trust Avraham had"; the grafted-in Gentiles
 - 1. Just as Avraham left the idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees on God's say-so without knowing his destination, so the former pagans of the Ekklesia had left their idolatry and started following Yeshua to a destination that they didn't yet know.
 - b. Abraham is the father of both, one physically and *both* spiritually
 - i. Physical circumcision marks the physical descendants
 - ii. "Spiritual circumcision" marks the true offspring of both

Our Father Abraham

Rom 4:17 This accords with the Tanakh, where it says, "I have appointed you to be a father to many nations." (Gen. 17:5) Avraham is our father in God's sight because he trusted God as the one who gives life to the dead and calls nonexistent things into existence.

Rom 4:18 For he was past hope, yet in hope he trusted that he would indeed become a father to many nations, in keeping with what he had been told, "So many will your seed be."

1. Repeats the point from vv. 1-3

Trust Over Theology

Rom 4:19 His trust did not waver when he considered his own body - which was as good as dead, since he was about

a hundred years old - or when he considered that Sarah's womb was dead too.

Rom 4:20 He did not by lack of trust decide against God's promises. On the contrary, by trust he was given power as he gave glory to God,

Rom 4:21 for he was fully convinced that what God had promised he could also accomplish.

Rom 4:22 This is why it was credited to his account as righteousness.

Rom 4:23 But the words, "it was credited to his account . . .," were not written for him only.

Rom 4:24 They were written also for us, who will certainly have our account credited too, because we have trusted in him who raised Yeshua our Lord from the dead -

Rom 4:25 Yeshua, who was delivered over to death because of our offences and raised to life in order to make us righteous.

1. God judges us according to the light we are given, not according to an arbitrary standard
 - a. Abraham didn't have a complete theology of sin, atonement, and the Messiah – he just knew that God had promised him a son, and he trusted that promise and was accounted righteous (Gen. 15:6)
 - b. God spared the Ninevites when they repented of the sins they knew just in the hope that He might spare them (Jon. 3:10).
 - i. When Jonah protested, God responded, “[S]houldn't I be concerned about the great city of Ninveh, in which there are more than 120,000 people **who don't know their right hand from their left** - not to mention all the animals?” (4:11)
 - ii. The Ninevites were so ignorant of right and wrong, they didn't know which hand was clean – yet God showed mercy because they responded even to the little bit of light they were given.
 - c. When Naaman the Syrian was cured of leprosy, he swore that he would only serve the God of Israel, but asked clemency so that he could perform his duties to his lord, even though that meant bowing in the temple of a pagan god. Elisha told him to go in peace, indicating that his request had been granted. (2Ki. 5)
 - i. **John 9:39-41** - Yeshua said, "It is to judge that I came into this world, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind." Some of the P'rushim nearby heard this and said to him, "So we're blind too, are we? Yeshua answered them, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin. But since you still say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.”
2. Those to whom more light is given, more is expected.

- a. **Luke 12:47f** – “Now the servant who knew what his master wanted but didn't prepare or act according to his will, will be whipped with many lashes; however, the one who did what deserves a beating, but didn't know, will receive few lashes. From him who has been given much, much will be demanded -- from someone to whom people entrust much, they ask still more.”
 - b. **Heb 6:4-8** - For when people have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become sharers in the *Ruach HaKodesh*, and tasted the goodness of God's Word and the powers of the *'olam haba* - and then have fallen away - it is impossible to renew them so that they turn from their sin, as long as for themselves they keep executing the Son of God on the stake all over again and keep holding him up to public contempt.
 For the land that soaks up frequent rains and then brings forth a crop useful to its owners receives a blessing from God; but if it keeps producing thorns and thistles, it fails the test and is close to being cursed; in the end, it will be burned.
 - i. “executing . . . all over again”
3. not referring to a resumption of sacrifices, which the Apostles never ceased (Acts 21:26, 24:17)
 4. but to falling away from the faith with full knowledge, thus bringing shame to the reputation of Yeshua.

Chapter 5

Obtaining Shalom and Grace

Rom 5:1 So, since we have come to be considered righteous by God because of our trust, let us continue to have *shalom* with God through our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah.

Rom 5:2 Also through him and on the ground of our trust, we have gained access to this grace in which we stand; so let us boast about the hope of experiencing God's glory.

1. “considered righteous”
 - a. Usually translated “justified”
 - b. Gr. δικαιωθέντες, from δικαιώω,
 - i. to be declared right, proper, or just in the eyes of the law, other people, etc.
 - ii. translates *tzedek* (צדק), a righteous man
 - c. That is, we have been declared by God to be righteous men because we have trusted in and become loyal to Him through His Messiah.

2. “let us continue to have *shalom*”

- a. The voice of the verb “have” (ἔχομεν) is *active*, not passive
- b. R. Gavri’el: “Your *shalom* is the place where you can most easily hear God; that’s why Satan always tries to take away your *shalom*.”
- c. What is *shalom*?
 - i. “In addition to ‘peace,’ this word can be translated as ‘prosperity, well-being, health, completeness, safety.’” (Mounce, *Dictionary* 502, “Peace”)
 1. “Completeness” is probably the primary meaning, the others following by implication”
 - ii. Gr. εἰρήνην, “In classical Gk. *eirene* describes a situation that results from the cessation of hostilities or war and can also refer to the state of the law and order that makes the fruits of prosperity possible.” (ibid., 503)
 - iii. “Peace can, ironically, prevail internally even when the violence of war is at its peak externally. Conversely, inner spiritual turmoil can be raging out of control when peaceful conditions prevail in the land. In other words, ‘peace’ is a state of being that lacks nothing and has no fear of being troubled in its tranquility . . .” (ibid.)
- d. A Biblical *shalom* is contrary to our natures, but it is commanded by our Master:
 - i. **Mat 6:25, 27** - "Therefore, I tell you, don't worry about your life -- what you will eat or drink; or about your body -- what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? . . . Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to his life?"
 - ii. **John 14:27** - "What I am leaving with you is *shalom* -- I am giving you my *shalom*. I don't give the way the world gives. Don't let yourselves be upset or frightened."
 - iii. **John 16:33** – “I have said these things to you so that, united with me, you may have *shalom*. In the world, you have *tsuris*. But be brave! I have conquered the world!”
 - iv. Mingled with the assurance that Yeshua gives us His *shalom* is the command to *actively receive* that *shalom*.

3. “access to this grace”

- a. The word “access” (προσῆλθῆναι) carries the sense of being granted audience with a king and is used in the LXX “with reference to bearing sacrifices to the altar or entering the Holy of Holies.” (Edwards, Romans 135)

- b. “Grace is conceived as a field into which we are brought” (VWS), a picture of the court of the Temple into which the true worshippers of God are admitted not by their own worthiness, but by God’s sovereign grant.
4. “boast about the hope of experiencing God’s glory”
- a. “boast” = Gr. *καυχώ μεθα*, in the sense of rejoicing in; Heb. *halal* (ללהל)
 - i. Boasting and rejoicing are good . . . if we boast in the Lord alone.
 - b. “in” = lit. “upon”
 - c. “hope of experiencing God’s glory”
 - i. You don’t hope for something you already have (Rom 8:24)
 - ii. **Tit 2:13** - . . . while continuing to expect the blessed fulfillment of our certain hope, which is the appearing of the *Sh'khinah* of our great God and the appearing of our Deliverer, Yeshua the Messiah.
 - d. We are to rejoice on the grounds of our hope of experiencing the return of the *Sh'khinah* of God in the Second Coming of Yeshua our Messiah.

Why Do Good People Suffer?

Rom 5:3 But not only that, let us also boast in our troubles; because we know that trouble produces endurance,

Rom 5:4 endurance produces character, and character produces hope;

Rom 5:5 and this hope does not let us down, because God's love for us has already been poured out in our hearts through the *Ruach HaKodesh* who has been given to us.

- 1. “boast in our troubles”
 - a. lit. “rejoice within/in the midst of our tribulations”
 - i. “troubles” = θλίψις (cf. Mat 24:21; Rev. 2:22, 7:14)
 - b. We are appointed to experience tribulations, troubles, and persecutions (1Th 3:4), but we should not confuse this with God’s wrath (5:9)
- 2. The growth of character
 - a. “endurance” = ὡς πομονήν, “can be understood either in an active (steady persistence in doing good) or a passive (patient enduring under difficulties) sense.” (Mounce, *Dic.* 214, “Endurance”)
 - b. “character” = δοκιμήν, a tested trustworthiness
 - c. “hope” = ἐλπίδα, confident anticipation of a sure event

- d. From a motivational poster I saw in a prison lobby: “Be careful of your thoughts, because thoughts become actions, actions become habits, habits become our character, and our character becomes our destiny.”
 - e. Our trials, troubles, and persecutions in life produce the discipline to do good and reject evil, which in turn produces a trustworthy character as actions become habits and habits become character, and this in turn produces an ever-greater confident expectation of the sure event of our Master’s return.
3. “hope does not let us down,” lit. “does not bring us shame”
- a. How do we know that our hope is not in vain? Because we have already experienced the present reality of the Breath of God, as evidenced by:
 - i. A new and different life from the one we had.
 - ii. The gifts of the Spirit—some overtly supernatural (prophecy, miracles, etc.), most not (teaching, helps, etc.).
 - b. The question over whether Gentiles had to become Jews by the ritual of circumcision in order to be saved was settled in part on the evidence that God’s Breath was **already** residing within them (Acts 15:8, Gal. 3:2)
 - c. The Spirit is the down-payment on our redemption and inheritance (2Co 1:22, Eph 1:14)
 - d. Sha’ul will be revisiting this subject in chapters 8 and 12.

At the Right Time

Rom 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time, the Messiah died on behalf of ungodly people.

- 1. “at the right time”
 - a. The time prophesied in Dan. 9:24-27, after the 69th Week but before the destruction of the Temple
 - b. In the time of the Second Temple
 - i. **Hag 2:6-9** - For this is what ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: "It won't be long before one more time I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasures of all the nations will flow in; and I will fill this house with glory," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. "The glory of this new house will surpass that of the old," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot, "and in this place I will grant shalom," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot."
 - ii. **Mal 3:1** - "Look! I am sending my messenger to clear the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. Yes, the messenger of the covenant, in whom you take such delight - look! Here he comes," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot.

- c. After four thousand years of human history
 - i. *A Tannaite authority of the house of Elijah [said], “For six thousand years the world will exist. For two thousand it will be desolate [of the Torah], two thousand years [will be the time of] Torah, and two thousand years will be the days of the Messiah, but on account of our numerous sins what has been lost [of those years, in which the Messiah should have come but has not come] has been lost. (b. Sanh. 97a-b)*

Dying For His Enemies

Rom 5:7 Now it is a rare event when someone gives up his life even for the sake of somebody righteous, although possibly for a truly good person one might have the courage to die.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in that the Messiah died on our behalf while we were still sinners.

1. Most of us could conceive dying for our families, friends, or other people that we consider “good”
2. But how many of us could die for the sake of a person who had spent several hours gleefully torturing us?

The Future Deliverance, The Present Reconciliation

Rom 5:9 Therefore, since we have now come to be considered righteous by means of his bloody sacrificial death, how much more will we be delivered through him from the anger of God's judgment!

Rom 5:10 For if we were reconciled with God through his Son's death when we were enemies, how much more will we be delivered by his life, now that we are reconciled!

Rom 5:11 And not only will we be delivered in the future, but we are boasting about God right now, because he has acted through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, through whom we have already received that reconciliation.

1. “will we be delivered” = future tense
 - a. Throughout Romans, Sha’ul speaks of salvation almost always in the future tense (except 8:24 – aorist)
 - b. Though in other books, he speaks of being saved as a present reality, here in Romans he emphasizes that we are *reconciled* to God now, and *will be saved* from His wrath on the Day of Judgment.
 - i. Eschatology was very much on Sha’ul’s mind, and he taught others accordingly (cf. Acts 17:1ff, 2Th. 2:5).

The One Man

Rom 5:12 Here is how it works: it was through one individual that sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death passed through to the whole human race, inasmuch as everyone sinned.

Rom 5:13 Sin was indeed present in the world before Torah was given, but sin is not counted as such when there is no Torah.

1. Once again, we see that God judges us by the light we are given. However, those who sin without Torah can still be judged, per 2:1-4

Rom 5:14 Nevertheless death ruled from Adam until Moshe, even over those whose sinning was not exactly like Adam's violation of a direct command. In this, Adam prefigured the one who was to come.

2. Messiah as the Second Adam

- a. **1Co 15:45** - In fact, the Tanakh says so: Adam, the first man, became a living human being; but the last "Adam" has become a life-giving Spirit.

- b. The First Adam

- i. In rabbinic literature, before the Fall Adam was conceived of as a near-divine being, "of an enormous size, extending . . . from heaven to earth [Gen. R. 8:1] . . . possessed of a glory derived from God Himself. . . The First Man was therefore altogether glorious; his fall was correspondingly disastrous." (Davies, *Paul* 46)
- ii. When his bride sinned, Adam joined with her in her sin, in effect trying to save her by breaking the Law.

- c. The Second Adam

- i. Starts off with the appearance of a common man, but after His Resurrection, "wearing a robe down to his feet and a gold band around his chest. His head and hair were as white as snow-white wool, his eyes like a fiery flame, his feet like burnished brass refined in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of rushing waters" (Rev. 1:13-15)
- ii. When His bride sinned, Messiah became a kinsman to her but did not sin Himself, saving her through obedience to the Torah and then giving up His life for her.

Rom 5:15 But the free gift is not like the offence. For if, because of one man's offence, many died, then how much more has God's grace, that is, the gracious gift of one man, Yeshua the Messiah, overflowed to many!

3. True unity in both Adams

- a. **1Co 15:22** - For just as in connection with Adam all die, so in connection with the Messiah all will be made alive.
- b. “Adam, then, stands for the real unity of mankind in virtue of his creation . . . The nature of Adam’s creation is made the basis of the duty of love, equality, and peace among men. To quote . . . M. Sanhedron 4:5: ‘Again but a single man was created for the sake of equality and peace among mankind that none should say to his fellow, My Father was greater than thy Father . . .’” (Davies, *Paul* 55)
- c. Discord and reconciliation
 - i. But because of the sin of the First Adam, that unity was broken as sin sowed discord among the sons of Adam.
 - ii. **Gal 3:26-28** - For in union with the Messiah, you are all children of God through this trusting faithfulness; because as many of you as were immersed into the Messiah have clothed yourselves with the Messiah, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua, you are all one.

Rom 5:16 No, the free gift is not like what resulted from one man's sinning; for from one sinner came judgment that brought condemnation; but the free gift came after many offences and brought acquittal.

Rom 5:17 For if, because of the offence of one man, death ruled through that one man; how much more will those receiving the overflowing grace, that is, the gift of being considered righteous, rule in life through the one man Yeshua the Messiah!

4. Mortality and death

- a. Adam’s mortality
 - i. Though many have conceived that Adam was made immortal, this was apparently not the case, else there would be no need for the Tree of Life.
 - ii. When Adam sinned, God took away access to the Tree of Life.
 - iii. This was a mercy: Adam had cut himself off from God by the shame of his sin. Immortality + sin and shame = hell
- b. Messiah’s gift of eternal life
 - i. Barnes’ *Notes* on v. 16: “If, under the administration of a just and merciful Being, it has occurred, that by the offence of one, death hath exerted so wide a dominion; we have reason much more to expect under that administration, that they who are brought under his plan of saving mercy shall be brought under a dispensation of life.”

Rom 5:18 In other words, just as it was through one offence that all people came under condemnation, so also it is through one righteous act that all people come to be considered righteous.

Rom 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the other man, many will be made righteous.

5. Original sin vs. propensity to sin

a. Original Sin: We inherited not only Adam's propensity to sin, but also the guilt of his sin, so that we are born condemned and worthy of hell.

i. *This theology is against Torah.*

1. **Deu 24:16** - "Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* sons, nor shall sons be put to death for *their* fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin."

2. **Eze 18:20** - The person who sins is the one that will die - a son is not to bear his father's guilt with him, nor is the father to bear his son's guilt with him; but the righteousness of the righteous will be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked will be his own.

b. Propensity to sin

i. In Jewish thought, no son is greater than his father (cf. 4:1-3)

ii. Therefore, since our first father rebelled against God, it is a natural given that we will do so as well – we inherit his *yetzer hara*, his evil inclination.

iii. Nevertheless, we also have free will and a choice, so we are not condemned for Adam's sin, but for the sins that we ourselves choose to commit.

Rom 5:20 And the Torah came into the picture so that the offence would proliferate; but where sin proliferated, grace proliferated even more.

6. "sin would proliferate"

a. The Torah has many purposes, not just one

b. While Christians tend to fixate on this one, it is nevertheless true that having a Law—any law—does tend to excite our *yetzer hara* against that Law.

i. A man who puts a "keep off the grass" sign in his yard will find more people walking through his grass than if he put up no sign at all.

- ii. An ever-increasing number of laws in this country intended to regulate human life has not curbed the tendency towards lawlessness.

Rom 5:21 All this happened so that just as sin ruled by means of death, so also grace might rule through causing people to be considered righteous, so that they might have eternal life, through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord.

Chapter 6

The Purpose of the *Mikveh*

Rom 6:1 So then, are we to say, "Let's keep on sinning, so that there can be more grace"?

Rom 6:2 Heaven forbid! How can we, who have died to sin, still live in it?

Rom 6:3 Don't you know that those of us who have been immersed into the Messiah Yeshua have been immersed into his death?

Rom 6:4 Through immersion into his death we were buried with him; so that just as, through the glory of the Father, the Messiah was raised from the dead, likewise we too might live a new life.

1. "Let's keep on sinning"
 - a. I once had a friend who quoted 6:1 to me, completely unironically. It is alarming that so many in the Christian community actually think that grace is a license to sin.
 - b. Yochanan dealt with this extensively in his writings:
 - i. **1Jn 1:6** - If we claim to have fellowship with him while we are walking in the darkness, we are lying and not living out the truth.
 - ii. **1Jn 2:4-6** - Anyone who says, "I know him," but isn't obeying his commands is a liar - the truth is not in him. But if someone keeps doing what he says, then truly love for God has been brought to its goal in him. This is how we are sure that we are united with him. A person who claims to be continuing in union with him ought to conduct his life the way he did.
 - iii. **1Jn 3:4** - Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah - indeed, sin is violation of Torah.
2. "immersed into the Messiah Yeshua" - ἐβαπτίσθημεν - *mikveh*
 - a. **John 3:3-5** "Yes, indeed," Yeshua answered him, "I tell you that unless a person is born again from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nakdimon said to him, "How can a grown man be 'born'? Can he go back into his mother's womb and be born a second time?" Yeshua answered, "Yes,

indeed, I tell you that unless a person is born from water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

- i. “Born again” was not an idea invented by Yeshua, but one known to Judaism:
 1. R. Yosé says, “A proselyte at the moment of conversion is like a new-born baby.” (b. Yevamot 48b)
 2. Simeon b. Laqish says, “. . . a proselyte is classified as a newborn baby . . .” (*ibid.*, 62a)
 3. “The Gentile that is made a proselyte, and the servant that is made free, behold, he is like a child new born. And all those relations he had while either Gentile or servant, they now cease from being so.” (Maimonides, *Issure Biah*, cap. 14)
 - ii. However, He did put a new spin on it: It was not enough to simply be born Jewish; one must undergo as radical a conversion as when a Gentile “died” in the waters of the *mikveh* and was “reborn” as a Jew when he came out.
 - iii. Ritual immersion provides a clean break between the old life and the new, as we will discuss below.
- b. **Col 2:11-12** - Also it was in union with him that you were circumcised with a circumcision not done by human hands, but accomplished by stripping away the old nature's control over the body. In this circumcision done by the Messiah, you were buried along with him by being immersed; and in union with him, you were also raised up along with him by God's faithfulness that worked when he raised Yeshua from the dead . . .
- i. Does this passage, as many Christians contend, replace circumcision with baptism? No.
 1. That Jews should continue to circumcise their children was clearly still very important to the Apostles (Acts 21:20ff).
 2. One has to reject at least one of two clear Biblical teachings in order to hold to infant baptism:
 - a. That we are not born into the Messiah's Covenant (as one is into the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants), but are re-born into it (Jn. 3).
 - b. Those who are immersed (baptized) are identifying themselves with the Messiah's death--i.e., dying to self--and are being raised again with Him into a new life in which one is dedicated to God (Col. 2:10-12, Gal. 3:27). An infant hasn't got an "old life" to die to yet.

5. **1Co 10:1f** - For, brothers, I don't want you to miss the significance of what happened to our fathers. All of them were guided by the pillar of cloud, and they all passed through the sea, and in connection with the cloud and with the sea they all immersed themselves into Moshe . . .
 - a. While Israel was set free from Pharaoh in the Passover and protected by the sentence of death by the blood of the lamb, it was not until “they all passed through the sea” that they actually left Egypt itself.
 - b. “immersed themselves *into* Moshe” – immersed themselves under Moshe’s authority and leadership, as we are immersed into Messiah
 - c. Is “baptism” necessary for salvation?
 - i. On the one hand, Israel was set free at the Passover.
 - ii. On the other hand, Israel did not have a “clean break” with Egypt until it crossed the Red Sea and left Egyptian soil.
 1. Pharaoh still came after them.
 - iii. In the same way, we are redeemed when we first put the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts of our hearts by faith, but our *mikveh* formally takes us out of Egypt, symbolizing the world.
 - iv. As with any ritual, water immersion is to be a symbolic way of acting out what is going on inside of us spiritually. The water has no power to save; it is simply the symbol that we have been redeemed and have started a new life that we live to Messiah.

Our Resurrection Like Messiah’s

Rom 6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

1. Sha’ul explores this theme extensively in 1Co. 15:
 - a. **1Co 15:20-24** - But the fact is that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, **the firstfruits of those who have died**. For since death came through a man, also the resurrection of the dead has come through a man. For just as in connection with Adam all die, so in connection with the Messiah all will be made alive. But each in his own order: **the Messiah is the firstfruits**; then those who belong to the Messiah, at the time of his coming; then the culmination, when he hands over the Kingdom to God the Father, after having put an end to every rulership, yes, to every authority and power.
 - i. Yeshua was raised on the Feast of Firstfruits, in which the firstfruits of the barley harvest were offered to God.
 - ii. The parallelism:

1. One didn't offer barley as the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, nor wheat for the firstfruits of the grape harvest – one offers the same sort of fruit as is about to be harvested.
2. Therefore, since Yeshua was raised bodily from the dead, and His body glorified and made immortal, we too will have the same sort of Resurrection.
 - a. **1Jn 3:2** - Dear friends, we are God's children now; and it has not yet been made clear what we will become. We do know that when he appears, we will be like him; because we will see him as he really is.

Freedom From Sin

Rom 6:6 We know that our old self was put to death on the execution-stake with him, so that the entire body of our sinful propensities might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

1. “old self”; lit. “old man”
 - a. Phrase used only by Sha’ul (cf. Eph 4:22; Col 3:9)
 - b. Here again we see the theme that our lives before we came to Messiah were, figuratively and spiritually speaking, lived by another person (see VWS). Since we are a whole new person, we should not be enslaved by the sins of the old person.
2. Crucifixion of the old self
 - a. “put to death on the execution stake” is lit. “crucified”—Stern infers “putting to death” but it is evident that for many the “old man” is still alive on its cross, as seen below
 - b. “might be destroyed” = καταργηθῆ
 - i. Destroyed does not mean annihilated, but is literally, “to down-idle,” that is, “to make completely idle,” “to abolish,” or “to make of no effect”
 1. **Rom 3:31** - Does it follow that we **abolish** (καταργουῶ μεν) Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah.
 - ii. Verb is aorist, passive, and subjunctive; i.e., “may or may not be destroyed from outside in the past, present, or future”
 1. The destruction is not a given; the subjunctive tense means it may or may not happen.

- c. Therefore, when we come to Messiah, our old self is crucified—immobilized and held up for contempt—but the complete abolition of its power to lead us into sin is not a given; we must turn from sin day-by-day

Dying to Sin

Rom 6:7 For someone who has died has been cleared from sin.

Rom 6:8 Now since we died with the Messiah, we trust that we will also live with him.

Rom 6:9 We know that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, never to die again; death has no authority over him.

Rom 6:10 For his death was a unique event that need not be repeated; but his life, he keeps on living for God.

Rom 6:11 In the same way, consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God, by your union with the Messiah Yeshua.

1. “someone who has died has been cleared from sin”
 - a. “The deathbed confession in the *Siddur* includes the words, ‘May my death be an atonement for all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of which I have been guilty against you’ (Hertz edition, pp. 1064-1065), following the pattern of a prayer in the Talmud (B’rakhhot 60a) and the Mishna (Sanhedron 6:2). Yoma 86a also speaks of death as ‘finishing’ the punishment for sin and quotes Isaiah 22:14, ‘Surely this iniquity shall not be atoned for [Hebrew *y’khuphar*, ‘covered’] until you die.’ Sha’ul here is drawing on the Jewish tradition that says an individual’s own death atones for his sin. He applies it by affirming that our union with the Messiah and with his death (vv. 3-6) means that we have effectively died; in union with the Messiah’s death we died, and that atones for our sin.” (Stern, *Commentary* 373)
2. “his death was a unique event,”
 - a. so in the same way, our “death” with Him is a unique event that does not need repeating.
 - b. We do not lose our salvation when we stumble.
3. “consider yourselves dead to sin”
 - a. Sha’ul tells us to take the attitude of being dead to sin even though we still struggle with sin; the attitudinal shift is vital for living “under grace”
4. “but alive for God”
 - a. As Yeshua serves the Father eternally and perfectly, we seek to emulate His example

“Do Not Go Down to Egypt”

Rom 6:12 Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal bodies, so that it makes you obey its desires;

Rom 6:13 and do not offer any part of yourselves to sin as an instrument for wickedness. On the contrary, offer yourselves to God as people alive from the dead, and your various parts to God as instruments for righteousness.

Rom 6:14 For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace.

1. “do not let sin rule”

- a. The King of Israel “is not to acquire many horses for himself or have the people return to Egypt to obtain more horses, inasmuch as ADONAI told you never to go back that way again” (Deu 17:16).
- b. When Israel was beset by enemies, she often turned to Egypt for help.
 - i. **2Ki 18:21** - Now look! Relying on Egypt is like using a broken stick as a staff - when you lean on it, it punctures your hand. That's what Pharaoh king of Egypt is like for anyone who puts his trust in him.
- c. In the same way, followers of Yeshua often return to old sinful patterns, especially under stress. Sha’ul here commands us not to, in line with the Torah.
 - i. When Israel turned back to Egypt, she became beholden to Egypt, in effect becoming a slave again.
 - ii. In the same way, when we return to old sinful patterns, it’s like we too returned to the land in which we were a slave rather than accept the responsibilities of free men.

2. “not under legalism but under grace”

- a. “under” (ὡς πῶ) = “under the authority of” or “controlled by”
 - i. Prophets spoke “under the Lord” (lit. in Mat. 1:22, 2:15) and “under the Holy Spirit” (2Pt 1:21)
 - ii. **Mat 8:9** - “For I too am a man under authority. I have soldiers under me, and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes; to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes; to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”
- b. “under grace” means to be “controlled by grace” or “beholden to grace”
 - i. Again, in the 1st Century world, a person who received a great *charis* from a benefactor was thereafter beholden to be loyal to and trust in that benefactor, or else he dishonored the benefactor and himself.
- c. “Controlled by grace” is put in opposition to being “controlled by the law” (cf. Gal. 3:23, 4:4 [where Messiah is “under the law”], 4:5, 4:21, 5:18)

- i. Note that Sha'ul's unexplained use here in Romans suggests that he expected them to already be familiar with Galatians
- d. However, "controlled by grace" is not put in opposition to being "in the law"
 - i. **Rom 3:19** – Moreover, we know that whatever the Torah says, it says to those living within the framework of the Torah (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ), in order that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world be shown to deserve God's adverse judgment.
 - ii. **1Co 9:21** - With those who live outside the framework of Torah (ἄ νόμοις, lit "lawless" or "wicked"), I put myself in the position of someone outside the Torah in order to win those outside the Torah - although I myself am not outside the framework of God's Torah but within the framework of Torah (ἐννομος) as upheld by the Messiah.
- e. The distinction:
 - i. "under the law" ("under legalism") is to attempt to be justified by it rather than by God's grace:
 1. **Gal 5:4** - You who are trying to be declared righteous by God through legalism have severed yourselves from the Messiah! You have fallen away from God's grace!
 2. Sadly, many Messianics, in discovering a zeal for the Torah, do fall into this trap, judging our Sunday brethren to be "unsaved" because they do not follow *certain parts of* the Torah (the ceremonial commands).
 3. This is why recognizing that God judges us by our response to the light we are given is so important.
 - ii. "in the Torah" is, as Stern translates it, living within the framework of the Torah, which we who are "controlled by grace" should do out of the loyalty we owe to the one who gave us Torah!

Just One Little Sin

Rom 6:15 Therefore, what conclusion should we reach?

"Let's go on sinning, because we're not under legalism but under grace"? Heaven forbid!

1. "sinning"
 - a. "The verb in verse one is in the present subjunctive, speaking of habitual, continuous action. The verb in verse fifteen is in the aorist subjunctive, referring to a single act." (Wuest)
 - b. "One little sin" is also forbidden to us.
 - i. **1Jn 3:4** - Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah - indeed, sin is violation of Torah.

Choosing Our Master

Rom 6:16 Don't you know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, then, of the one whom you are obeying, you are slaves - whether of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to being made righteous?

Rom 6:17 By God's grace, you, who were once slaves to sin, obeyed from your heart the pattern of teaching to which you were exposed;

Rom 6:18 and after you had been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness.

Rom 6:19 (I am using popular language because your human nature is so weak.) For just as you used to offer your various parts as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led to more lawlessness; so now offer your various parts as slaves to righteousness, which leads to being made holy, set apart for God.

Rom 6:20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in relationship to righteousness;

Rom 6:21 but what benefit did you derive from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end result of those things was death.

Rom 6:22 However, now, freed from sin and enslaved to God, you do get the benefit - it consists in being made holy, set apart for God, and its end result is eternal life.

Rom 6:23 For what one earns from sin is death; but eternal life is what one receives as a free gift from God, in union with the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord.

1. Each of us, every human being, must make a choice: Who will we accept as our master?
 - a. Sin, and through it the one who leads us to sin, the Adversary?
 - b. Or grace, and the One who gives us this grace, the Eternal God?
 - c. There is no third option:
 - i. If we say, "I'll serve myself," then we are really choosing to serve sin.
 - ii. If we choose to serve another human being, then we are choosing to serve whatever that person serves.
2. "slaves to sin"
 - a. **Eph 2:1-3** - You used to be dead because of your sins and acts of disobedience. You walked in the ways of the *'olam hazeh* and obeyed the Ruler of the Powers of the Air, who is still at work among the disobedient. Indeed, we all once lived this way - we followed the passions of our old nature and obeyed the wishes of our old nature and our own thoughts. In our natural condition we were headed for God's wrath, just like everyone else.

- i. The three sources of sin:
 - 1. Walking in the ways of the present world, “obey[ing] from your heart the pattern of teaching to which you were exposed”
 - 2. Obeying the Adversary
 - 3. Following the passions of our old nature
- b. “free in relationship to righteousness”
 - i. That is, did not feel the compulsion, the pangs of conscience, which now convict us when we sin.
 - ii. But nevertheless were following our master into death.
- 3. “enslaved to righteousness . . . and God”
 - a. Examples
 - i. Like Eleazar, who willingly served Abraham all his life
 - ii. Like the *talmidim*, who willingly followed Yeshua wherever He went
 - b. Thus we are set apart, not only for service in this life, but the reward of a joyous service in the World to Come and throughout Eternity

Chapter 7

Dying to the Law

Rom 7:1 Surely you know, brothers - for I am speaking to those who understand Torah - that the Torah has authority over a person only so long as he lives?

Rom 7:2 For example, a married woman is bound by Torah to her husband while he is alive; but if the husband dies, she is released from the part of the Torah that deals with husbands.

Rom 7:3 Therefore, while the husband is alive, she will be called an adulteress if she marries another man; but if the husband dies, she is free from that part of the Torah; so that if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

Rom 7:4 Thus, my brothers, you have been made dead with regard to the Torah through the Messiah's body, so that you may belong to someone else, namely, the one who has been raised from the dead, in order for us to bear fruit for God.

- 1. “those who understand Torah” – speaking to the Jewish believers in Rome in particular.
- 2. Dying to the Torah

- a. Sha'ul's attitude towards the Torah destroys the idea that he is advocating ceasing to practice it
 - i. **Acts 23:6** - But knowing that one part of the Sanhedrin consisted of Tz'dukim and the other of P'rushim, Sha'ul shouted, "Brothers, I myself am a Parush and the son of P'rushim; and it is concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead that I am being tried!"
 - ii. **Rom 7:12** - So the Torah is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good
 - iii. Regarded the Torah as binding on Jewish and proselyte believers (Acts 21:20ff, Gal. 5:3)
 - iv. **1Ti 1:8** - We know that the Torah is good, provided one uses it in the way the Torah itself intends.
 - 1. **Gal 5:14** - For the whole of the Torah is summed up in this one sentence: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Rom 13:8ff)
 - 2. **Gal 6:2** - Bear one another's burdens - in this way you will be fulfilling the Torah's true meaning, which the Messiah upholds.
 - v. Did not see the Torah as being in opposition to the promises of grace (Gal. 3:21), but as pointing to Messiah, the source of God's grace (Rom 10:4)
 - vi. Cited the Torah in making Messianic *halakha* (1Co 9:9, etc.)
- b. Rather, he is speaking of dying to the Torah *as an end to itself*
 - i. The Written Torah points us to Yeshua, the Living Torah
 - 1. **Rom 10:4** - For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.
 - 2. **John 5:39f** – “You keep examining the Tanakh because you think that in it you have eternal life. Those very Scriptures bear witness to me, but you won't come to me in order to have life!”
 - ii. The Written Torah is the Messiah's shadow (cf. Col 2:17),
 - 1. Symbolically
 - a. A kosher Torah scroll is the Word of God written on lambskin, nailed to two pieces of wood (the rollers) which are called the *Eytz Chaim* (Tree of Life; cf. Pro 3:18), robed in splendor, wearing the breastplate representing that of the High Priest, topped with a crown or a pair of finials that represent crowns.

- b. Yeshua is the Word of God come as the Lamb, nailed to two pieces of wood that are to us a Tree of Life, now robed in splendor, interceding for us as our High Priest, and wearing many crowns upon His head.

2. Practically

- a. In the Torah's histories are the prophetic types of Messiah (Isaac, Joseph, Moses, etc.)
 - b. In the Torah's ceremonies, we continually reenact God's plan of Redemption, past and future (see The Feasts and the Exodus; Col 2:17)
 - c. In the righteous moral commands of the Torah, we see the righteousness of the Messiah and learn to become more like Him day-by-day (cf. Rom 8:29)
- iii. And while we love Messiah so much that we love even His shadow, we do not mistake the shadow for the person.

Letter vs. Spirit

Rom 7:5 For when we were living according to our old nature, the passions connected with sins worked through the Torah in our various parts, with the result that we bore fruit for death.

Rom 7:6 But now we have been released from this aspect of the Torah, because we have died to that which had us in its clutches, so that we are serving in the new way provided by the Spirit and not in the old way of outwardly following the letter of the law.

1. The Torah inspires us to sin because of the dominance of our *yetzer hara* – see below
2. “released from this aspect of the Torah”
 - a. lit. “we have been abolished (κατηργήθημεν) from the law”
 - i. Not “the law has been abolished” (cf. 3:31; same root word for “abolish”), which would contradict the earlier statement that we uphold the Torah.
 - ii. Rather, we have been abolished from the particular aspect of the Torah that inspires us to sin more, because we have died to the Torah as an end to itself and been born anew to the Messiah that Torah points to.
3. Letter vs. Spirit
 - a. To those who are still “wed” to the Torah, the letter can be all-consuming.

- i. Putting a fence around a command to avoid breaking it is all well and good (cf. Avot 1:1) – but when the fences themselves become regarded as a kind of Torah, we end up with endless fences around fences.
- ii. Examples:
 - 1. The additions to the kosher commandments in ways which would have been impossible for the vast majority of 1st Century Jews to keep—like having separate refrigerators and dishes for meat and dairy—and which only serve the purpose of promoting division in matters of table fellowship, even between different groups of Orthodox Jews.
 - 2. Conversely, it is the “letter of the law” that allows many Jews to employ a “Sabbath gentile” to perform the tasks that they consider to be forbidden on the Sabbath, like turning on the lights.
- b. To those wed to Messiah and having Torah written on our hearts (Jer. 31:31ff, Heb. 8:8ff), and to non-Messianic Jews who focus on the spirit of the Torah, a different set of priorities emerge.
 - i. The Apostles extended table-fellowship to even Gentiles who would have been barely aware of the requirements of Biblical kosher—they would not have countenanced rabbinic additions that made such fellowship between believers impossible.
 - ii. Nor would they have encouraged Gentiles to perform actions that they considered sinful for themselves for the purpose of making their lives easier.

Torah Defines Sin

Rom 7:7 Therefore, what are we to say? That the Torah is sinful? Heaven forbid! Rather, the function of the Torah was that without it, I would not have known what sin is. For example, I would not have become conscious of what greed is if the Torah had not said, "Thou shalt not covet."

- 1. A syllogism:
 - a. Premise 1: The Torah defines what is sin and what is not.
 - b. Premise 2: We are not to deliberately sin just because we are under God’s grace.
 - c. Conclusion: Therefore, though no longer married to the Torah as an end to itself, we should still keep it in all ways.
- 2. Yeshua commanded us to keep even the least commandments of the Torah (Mat 5:17-19)

Law Promotes Lawlessness

Rom 7:8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, worked in me all kinds of evil desires - for apart from Torah, sin is dead.

Rom 7:9 I was once alive outside the framework of Torah. But when the commandment really encountered me, sin sprang to life,

Rom 7:10 and I died. The commandment that was intended to bring me life was found to be bringing me death!

Rom 7:11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me; and through the commandment, sin killed me.

1. Human nature has the perverse urge to violate any law that confronts it
 - a. Adam and Eve had only one negative commandment—not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—and yet it was so easy for the Serpent to tempt our first parents into doing just that.
 - b. This is not unique to the Torah of Moses
 - i. The Sermon on the Mount has the same effect: “I’m not hurting anyone just by looking at a woman. Why shouldn’t I? It’s perfectly natural!”
 - ii. If you want to see people walking through your yard, just put out a “Keep off the grass” sign.
 - iii. People raised in families who outright forbid drinking are more likely to abuse alcohol when on their own than those who were allowed to drink in moderation and under supervision growing up.
2. “alive outside the framework of Torah”
 - a. “In Romans 7 Paul divides his life into three periods: roughly they are as follows. First, a period when although sin was latent in him, it was ‘dead’, and he was able to live a full life without restraint, the age of innocence as we should call it. Secondly, the period when the commandment came and with it sin sprang to life. Hitherto sin was not known as sin; it was revealed as such by the Law. The latter, moreover, not only brought into being the awareness of the sinfulness of sin but also, on the principle that forbidden fruits are sweetest, actually gave an impetus towards sin. Paul is driven into the painful state that Aristotle called *ακρασια* (incontinence) in which a man knows what is right and desires it and yet cannot do it. He becomes a Jekyll and Hyde. The third stage in the Apostle’s life is that in which the Spirit come to deliver him.” (Davies, *Paul* 24)
 - b. Among the rabbis, it is commonly taught that until the age of thirteen, the *yetzer hara* has full sway, but at thirteen (the age of *bar mitzvah*), the struggle between the *yetzer hara* and the *yetzer hatov* (good inclination) began.

3. Paul speaks of “sin” as a personal being here (cf. Gen 4:7), synonymous with the author of sin, the Adversary.
 - a. He parallels his own innocence, deception, and death with that of Adam and Eve.

The Goodness of the Torah

Rom 7:12 So the Torah is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good.

Rom 7:13 Then did something good become for me the source of death? Heaven forbid! Rather, it was sin working death in me through something good, so that sin might be clearly exposed as sin, so that sin through the commandment might come to be experienced as sinful beyond measure.

1. If the Torah is holy, and its commandment holy, just, and good, should we not seek to follow it just as Yeshua did?
2. The problem is not, and has never been, that the Torah is impossible to keep (see notes on 10:6f below) – it is that the sin in us rejects God’s commandments.

The Struggle of the Redeemed

Rom 7:14 For we know that the Torah is of the Spirit; but as for me, I am bound to the old nature, sold to sin as a slave.

Rom 7:15 I don't understand my own behavior - I don't do what I want to do; instead, I do the very thing I hate!

Rom 7:16 Now if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am agreeing that the Torah is good.

Rom 7:17 But now it is no longer "the real me" doing it, but the sin housed inside me.

Rom 7:18 For I know that there is nothing good housed inside me - that is, inside my old nature. I can want what is good, but I can't do it!

Rom 7:19 For I don't do the good I want; instead, the evil that I don't want is what I do!

Rom 7:20 But if I am doing what "the real me" doesn't want, it is no longer "the real me" doing it but the sin housed inside me.

Rom 7:21 So I find it to be the rule, a kind of perverse "torah," that although I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me!

Rom 7:22 For in my inner self I completely agree with God's Torah;

Rom 7:23 but in my various parts, I see a different "torah," one that battles with the Torah in my mind and makes me a prisoner of sin's "torah," which is operating in my various parts.

Rom 7:24 What a miserable creature I am! Who will rescue me from this body bound for death?

Rom 7:25 Thanks be to God [, he will]! - through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord! To sum up: with my mind, I am a slave of God's Torah; but with my old nature, I am a slave of sin's "Torah."

1. Sha'ul here openly and honestly speaks of the agony of the follower of Messiah, seemingly torn almost in half between two natures.

Chapter 8

The Two Laws

Rom 8:1 Therefore, there is no longer any condemnation awaiting those who are in union with the Messiah Yeshua.

Rom 8:2 Why? Because the Torah of the Spirit, which produces this life in union with Messiah Yeshua, has set me free from the "Torah" of sin and death.

1. Following his passionate depiction of the believers' dilemma, Sha'ul is quick to assure his audience that they are under God's love rather than His judgment.
 - a. Stern (*Comm.* 380) links 7:25 to 8:1 to convey Sha'ul's thought: "To sum up: although with my mind I am a slave to God's Torah, but with my old nature a slave to sin's "torah," nevertheless, therefore, [i.e., because of Yeshua, as explained above], there is no longer any condemnation awaiting those who are in union with the Messiah Yeshua."
2. "Torah" of sin and death
 - a. Here Stern would probably have been better off simply translating *nomos* as "law"
 - b. The "law of sin and death" is that sin leads to death, not that the Torah itself leads to death
 - i. In contrast to "the Torah of the Spirit" which we are told is *the* Torah in 7:14.
 - ii. **Lev 18:5** - You are to observe my laws and rulings; if a person does them, he will have life through them; I am ADONAI.

The Weakness of the Torah

Rom 8:3 For what the Torah could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending his own Son as a human being with a nature like our own sinful one [but without sin]. God did this in order to deal with sin, and in so doing he executed the punishment against sin in human nature,

Rom 8:4 so that the just requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us who do not run our lives according to

what our old nature wants but according to what the Spirit wants.

1. “what the [written] Torah could not do” – lit. “what is impossible for the Torah”

a. The problem is not in the Torah, but in ourselves

i. The written Torah cannot by itself change a person’s basic nature, the desire to rebel.

1. In fact, it inspires our nature to rebel.

ii. It takes being given a new life by the Breath of God, having the Torah written on our hearts by the power of the Spirit (Jer. 31:31ff, Ezk. 36:26f).

b. Nevertheless, even before the pouring out of the Spirit “on all flesh” (Joel 2:28), the Torah still had an important function beyond simply showing the wickedness of human nature:

i. **Gal 3:21-24** Does this mean that the legal part of the Torah stands in opposition to God's promises? Heaven forbid! For if the legal part of the Torah which God gave had had in itself the power to give life, then righteousness really would have come by legalistically following such a Torah. But instead, the Tanakh shuts up everything under sin; so that what had been promised might be given, on the basis of Yeshua the Messiah's trusting faithfulness, to those who continue to be trustingly faithful.

Now before the time for this trusting faithfulness came, we were imprisoned in subjection to the system which results from perverting the Torah into legalism, kept under guard until this yet-to-come trusting faithfulness would be revealed. Accordingly, the Torah functioned as a custodian until the Messiah came, so that we might be declared righteous on the ground of trusting and being faithful.

1. If God could make men walk righteously before Him simply by giving them His teachings, the Torah would have sufficed.

2. But since it is our nature to rebel against any law at all, the Torah shows us all to be sinful, so that we will instead throw ourselves upon God’s loving grace in Yeshua.

3. “imprisoned in subjection to a system . . . [of] legalism”

a. lit. “kept in custody under the law”

b. Stern (*Comm.* 552) states that legalism was the particular sin of the Jewish people; the Gentiles, of course, had their own sins that they fell into.

c. However, perhaps we should not see the construction of fences around the Torah as a sin so much as a necessity:

- d. Not having a supernatural ability to resist the *yetzer ha'ra*, a society must continually construct new fences (cf. Avot 1:1) to fill in the “loopholes” that our sinful nature seeks out.
 - i. Just look at the tangled mess of the American legal system!
 - ii. It should also be noted that many rabbinic traditions actually attempt to make keeping the Torah easier, not harder, making allowances for living in imperfect circumstances.
 - e. But a body that is “in Messiah,” partaking of His Spirit, would not need such safeguards, since each member would be expected to seek the good of others instead of loopholes for themselves.
2. “a human being with a nature like our own sinful one” – lit. “in the likeness of sinful flesh”
- a. As we saw in 5:12-13,
 - i. Adam was reduced from a reflection of the Divine glory to the condition of “sinful flesh”
 - ii. Yeshua was born “in the likeness of sinful flesh” and raised back up to the glory of Deity by His obedience to the Father in all things, reversing Adam’s curse.
3. “so that the just requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us”
- a. This is not to say that when we “believe” in Yeshua we automatically fulfill the just requirement of the Torah,
 - b. but rather that by turning from our old nature, our *yetzer ha'ra*, to the Spirit, we are given the power to live our lives in accordance to the Torah’s teachings.
 - i. **1Jn 1:6, 3:4-6** - If we claim to have fellowship with him while we are walking in the darkness, we are lying and not living out the truth. . . Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah - indeed, sin is violation of Torah. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and that there is no sin in him. So no one who remains united with him continues sinning; everyone who does continue sinning has neither seen him nor known him
 - c. This truth is proven by Sha’ul’s point continued in the next verse.

Choosing Our Identity

Rom 8:5 For those who identify with their old nature set their minds on the things of the old nature, but those who

identify with the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Rom 8:6 Having one's mind controlled by the old nature is death, but having one's mind controlled by the Spirit is life and shalom.

Rom 8:7 For the mind controlled by the old nature is hostile to God, because it does not submit itself to God's Torah - indeed, it cannot.

Rom 8:8 Thus, those who identify with their old nature cannot please God.

Rom 8:9 But you, you do not identify with your old nature but with the Spirit - provided the Spirit of God is living inside you, for anyone who doesn't have the Spirit of the Messiah doesn't belong to him.

Rom 8:10 However, if the Messiah is in you, then, on the one hand, the body is dead because of sin; but, on the other hand, the Spirit is giving life because God considers you righteous.

1. In 6:6, we learned the nature of our present struggle:
 - a. Our old self has already been put on a cross if we have chosen to follow Messiah.
 - i. Not yet destroyed,
 - ii. but held up to shame and contempt, immobilized
 - b. However, this was done so that “our sinful propensities **might be** destroyed, and we **might** no longer be enslaved to sin.”
 - i. The subjunctive voice indicates that this is final destruction of our predilection to sin is not a given.
 - c. The point that we have an ongoing choice to make is repeated here by Paul.
2. We have to decide what kind of mind we will have
 - a. A “mind of the flesh” (lit.), which leads to separation from God, or
 - b. A “mind of the Spirit” is given the life and peace of God’s Breath.
3. When we decided to come to Messiah, we made our choice; crucifying our old nature, showing it to be shameful and not worth following.
 - a. What remains is to finish putting to death our propensity to sin.
 - b. In other words, we have been saved and justified, but *sanctification*, being set apart from the ways of the world, is an ongoing process.

- i. This is why so many of our prayers begin, “Blessed are You O L-RD our God, who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us . . .”

The Promise of Life in the Spirit

Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Yeshua from the dead is living in you, then the One who raised the Messiah Yeshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

1. “is living” is the present condition, “will also give life” is the future promise
2. This is a reiteration of the promise of 6:5, from a different angle
 - a. Before, our Resurrections assurance is the Resurrection of Messiah
 - b. Here, our Resurrection assurance is the Living Breath already dwelling inside of us
 - i. **Eph 1:13-14** – Furthermore, you who heard the message of the truth, the Good News offering you deliverance, and put your trust in the Messiah were sealed by him with the promised Ruach HaKodesh, who guarantees our inheritance until we come into possession of it and thus bring him praise commensurate with his glory.
 1. “guarantees” = ἡ ῥαβωνία v, lit. is our pledge (money) or downpayment
 - ii. **2Co 1:21-22** - Moreover, it is God who sets both us and you in firm union with the Messiah; he has anointed us, put his seal on us, and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee for the future.
3. “mortal bodies” = *soma*, not *sarx*, as when Sha’ul is speaking of the “flesh” as in “ the old sinful nature” or “the external appearance”

I Set Before You Life and Death

Rom 8:12 So then, brothers, we don't owe a thing to our old nature that would require us to live according to our old nature.

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to your old nature, you will certainly die; but if, by the Spirit, you keep putting to death the practices of the body, you will live.

Rom 8:14 All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to bring you back again into fear; on the contrary, you received the Spirit, who makes us sons and by whose power we cry out, "Abba!" (that is, "Dear Father!").

Rom 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our own spirits that we are children of God;

Rom 8:17 and if we are children, then we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Messiah - provided

we are suffering with him in order also to be glorified with him.

1. “God’s sons” vs. “slavery”

a. A parallel in the Exodus

i. **Exo 4:22-23** - Then you are to tell Pharaoh: 'ADONAI says, "Isra'el is my firstborn son. I have told you to let my son go in order to worship me . . .”

ii. **Heb 2:14-15** - Therefore, since the children share a common physical nature as human beings, he became like them and shared that same human nature; so that by his death he might render ineffective the one who had power over death (that is, the Adversary) and thus set free those **who had been in bondage all their lives because of their fear of death.**

1. Like Pharaoh had the power of life and death over the Hebrews and used that power and the fear it engenders to subject them to slavery.

b. The same word for slavery (δουλεία) is used in Gal. 4:21-5:1, where Sha’ul uses it to describe what the Judaizers were trying to do to the Gentile converts:

i. By forcing them to become Jewish (circumcise) and give up their own ethnic backgrounds for salvation (Acts 15:1), the Judaizers were essentially doing exactly what Pharaoh had tried prior to the Exodus by slaying the male children: Forced assimilation.

1. Sadly, it would later be the official Church which would take up the mantle of Pharaoh to the Jews during the Middle Ages.

ii. Further, by trying to force the Gentiles to keep a Pharisaic level of Torah and tradition (Acts 15:6)—something even those trying to force the issue of circumcision weren’t doing (Rom. 3:17ff, Gal. 6:13)!—those who didn’t believe in Yeshua were trying to demonstrate their dominance over those who did.

1. This is one reason why Messianic Judaism has to develop its own rabbis and *halakhah*:

a. Not only is it necessary to be taken seriously by the Jewish community,

b. but we must also assert our freedom to develop *halakhah* consistent with a New Covenant understanding of the Scriptures.

2. “Abba! Father!” (ἀββᾶ, ὁ πατήρ)

- a. Mark 14:36 uses the same combination of Aramaic and Greek in Yeshua's cry to remove the cup.
 - i. Yeshua, in extremis in Gethsemene, reverts to the Aramaic of His native Galilee over the Hebrew *Avi*.
 - b. "The repetition is probably from a liturgical formula which may have originated among the Hellenistic Jews who retained the consecrated word *Abba*. Some find here a hint of the union of Jew and Gentile in God." (VWS on Rom. 8:15).
 - c. In the Talmud, it is recorded that slaves were not to call the Patriarchs and Matriarchs "father" and "mother," e.g. "Father Abraham" (b. Berakhot 16b).
 - i. Neither could we as merely God's slaves call Him "Abba," a familiar term—for that, we had to be adopted as children.
 - 1. **John 1:12** - But to as many as did receive him, to those who put their trust in his person and power, he gave the right to become children of God . . . **Rom 8:29** – that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
 - d. In the Jewish liturgy,
 - i. God is mostly referred to as *Melekh haOlam*, King of the Universe.
 - ii. But when we pray the Benedictions of Repentance and Forgiveness, we address Him as Father.
 - 1. "A father has the responsibility of teaching his son the proper way to conduct his life. Yet, even if a son has rebelled against his father and has become estranged from him, when the son repents and seeks forgiveness, his fathers compassion will assert himself." (*Etz Yosef*, quoted in the Artscroll *Siddur* 108)
 - 2. Yeshua Himself refers to this quality in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.
3. "the Spirit bears witness with our own spirit" or "to our own spirit"
- a. Spirit () can mean both "the [natural] controlling directive power in man" and "supernatural influences" or "a divine invasion" (Davies, *Paul* 185)
 - b. The fruits and gifts of the Spirit, God's transformative power in our lives and hearts, bears witness that He has accepted and even adopted us.

The Revelation of the Children of God

Rom 8:18 I don't think the sufferings we are going through now are even worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us in the future.

Rom 8:19 The creation waits eagerly for the sons of God to be revealed;

Rom 8:20 for the creation was made subject to frustration - not willingly, but because of the one who subjected it. But it was given a reliable hope
 Rom 8:21 that it too would be set free from its bondage to decay and would enjoy the freedom accompanying the glory that God's children will have.
 Rom 8:22 We know that until now, the whole creation has been groaning as with the pains of childbirth;
 Rom 8:23 and not only it, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we continue waiting eagerly to be made sons - that is, to have our whole bodies redeemed and set free.

1. “sufferings” = *παθήματα*, suffering, pain, weakness, illness; “pathology” is the study of illness
 - a. Can mean persecution:
 - i. **John 16:33** - "I have said these things to you so that, united with me, you may have *shalom*. In the world, you have *tsuris*. But be brave! I have conquered the world!"
 - ii. **1Th 3:4** – [W]e kept telling you in advance that we were about to be persecuted; and indeed it has happened, as you know.
 - b. but is not limited to it; everyday sufferings and struggles—particularly the struggle with sin and the old nature—are also very much in Sha’ul’s view.
2. “the creation waits eagerly . . . [because it] was made subject to frustration”
 - a. “the creation,” the “whole creation” (*παῦσα ἡ κτίσις*) in v. 22
 - i. Used to refer to the whole human world, not the whole natural world
 1. **Mark 16:15** - Then he (Yeshua) said to them, "As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to **all creation.**"
 2. **Col 1:23** – This is the Good News that has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven; and I, Sha'ul, have become a servant of it.
 - a. “has been proclaimed” (*κηρυχθῆντος*) is in the aorist tense, not the past
 - b. “frustration” = *ματαιότητι*, perversity, frailty, futility
 - i. That is, the whole human world was subjected to futility – this is referring to the corruption of the “world system” of human relations and government
 - ii. Nevertheless, this corruption did extend into the natural world as well

1. **Gen 3:17-18** - To Adam he said, "Because you listened to what your wife said and ate from the tree about which I gave you the order, 'You are not to eat from it,' the ground is cursed on your account; you will work hard to eat from it as long as you live. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat field plants."
2. When Man, who was set in dominion over the earth ("Heaven belongs to ADONAI, but the earth he has given to humankind." Psa 115:16) fell, the natural order was twisted as well. Instead of turning the whole world into a garden, we have turned it into a graveyard.
 - iii. By "the one who subjected it"—he who rules the world system by fear and death, the Adversary
3. "for the sons of God to be revealed," lit, "the unveiling (apocalypse) of the sons of God"
 - a. At the current time we exist, but the work of the Spirit is hidden within us, invisible to the outside world except through our actions, waiting for the day when it can be revealed in its fullness.
 - b. **1Jn 3:1-2** - See what love the Father has lavished on us in letting us be called God's children! For that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it has not known him. Dear friends, we are God's children now; and it has not yet been made clear what we will become. We do know that when he appears, we will be like him; because we will see him as he really is.
 - c. See 5:12f for the rabbinic view of Adam's glory before he fell
4. "pains of childbirth"
 - a. Known to the rabbis as the "birth pangs of the Messiah," the tribulations that would precede His coming (cf. b. Ketubot 111a).
 - b. **Mat 24:4-8** Yeshua replied: "Watch out! Don't let anyone fool you! For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray. You will hear the noise of wars nearby and the news of wars far off; see to it that you don't become frightened. Such things must happen, but the end is yet to come. For peoples will fight each other, nations will fight each other, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various parts of the world; all this is but the beginning of the 'birth pains.'"
 - i. The "birth pains" continue with the Great Tribulation in the next verses
5. "to have our whole bodies redeemed and set free," whereas now we have only been set free in our "true selves," the new us that must still live within these bodies of sin and death (cf. 7:14ff)

Hope Without Uncertainty

Rom 8:24 It was in this hope that we were saved. But if we see what we hope for, it isn't hope - after all, who hopes for what he already sees?

Rom 8:25 But if we continue hoping for something we don't see, then we still wait eagerly for it, with perseverance.

1. “hope” = ἐλπίζω,
 - a. not an uncertain possibility, as in the modern sense,
 - b. but the expectation of something **that is certain to occur**.
 - c. Thus, the translation could be, “It was in this certain expectation that we were saved. But if we have what we expect, it isn't expectation – after all, who expects what he already has? . . .”

The Spirit's Intercession

Rom 8:26 Similarly, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we don't know how to pray the way we should. But the Spirit himself pleads on our behalf with groanings too deep for words;

Rom 8:27 and the one who searches hearts knows exactly what the Spirit is thinking, because his pleadings for God's people accord with God's will.

1. Why the Spirit? The Spirit gives life (Gen 2:7, Job 33:4, Rom 8:10), and therefore works to counteract the death we invite with our sin.
2. “Similarly” – continuing the thought of how God helps us in our present predicament to bring us to the day of full adoption:
 - a. There is no longer any condemnation
 - b. He gives us the right of children to call upon our Abba
 - c. He gives us the certain expectation of the future revelation of His *Sh'khinah* (glory), which will transform the present corrupted world
 - d. He gives us His Spirit/Breath as a down payment
 - i. The Spirit gives us aid against our old nature, the *yetzer ha'ra*
 - ii. And the Spirit intercedes for us, the subject of this passage
3. “helps”
 - a. “Helpeth” is *sunantilambanō*, made up of *sun*, ‘together with,’ *anti* ‘over against,’ and *lambanō*, ‘to take.’ The word speaks of the action of a person coming to another's aid by taking hold over against that person, of the load he is carrying. The person helping does not take the entire load, but helps the

other person in his endeavor. The word is used where Martha says to the Lord Jesus concerning Mary, 'Bid her therefore that she help me' (Luke 11:40). One could translate, 'Bid her lend me a helping hand,' the idea being that Martha would continue preparing the meal but needed Mary to help her.' (Weust's *Word Studies* on Rom 8:26)

- b. "I found Daudid my slave; with my holy oil I anointed him. Indeed, my hand shall sustain (συναντιλημψεται, lit. "help support") him; my arm also shall strengthen him." (Psa 88[89]:21-22[20-21])
4. "pleads on our behalf" – especially in regards to temptation and sin
 - a. as Moses pled (interceded) for Israel when she sinned (Exo 32-33),
 - b. as the High Priest interceded for Israel on Yom Kippur,
 - c. as Yeshua intercedes for us in the Heavenly *Mishkan* (Tabernacle; Heb 5-10),
 - d. so the Spirit intercedes from the Holy of Holies of the Temple of our bodies (cf. 1Co 3:16, 6:19; 2Co 6:16)
 5. "groanings too deep for words" – lit. "unutterable groaning/sighing/cries"
 - a. **Acts 7:34** - "I have clearly seen how My people are being oppressed in Egypt, I have heard their cry (groaning; στεναγμοῦ), and I have come down to rescue them, and now I will send you to Egypt."
 - b. Praying in tongues?
 - i. "In my opinion . . . the one [interpretation] that is most objectionable is the one which declares that the Spirit's intercession 'for us with groanings too deep for words' refers to praying in tongues. If this were so we would have to affirm that Jesus never prayed in the Holy Spirit, for He is never recorded as speaking or praying in tongues. This would also mean that when one prays with the mind (1 Cor. 14:14-19), that is, with the full use of his faculties, which is characteristic of all prayers recorded in Scripture, he is not praying in the Holy Spirit. If not, then he is praying in the flesh. Such a conclusion would be totally repugnant to most Christians.
"Also, this would mean that Christians who do not have what is commonly called 'a prayer language' do not have the benefit of the Spirit interceding for them . . ." (Murphy, *Warfare* 78)
 - ii. Prayer language is not speaking in tongues
 1. Speaking in tongues means to speak in a language of human beings, as in Acts 2:6, 10:46 (see notes on Shavuot in The Feasts and the Exodus).
 - a. Tongues may be spoken aloud if there is an interpreter (1Co 14:27f)

2. What is called a ‘prayer language’ on the other hand, is deeply personal, a gift of hearing the intercession of the Spirit, even if we can’t fully understand it.
 - a. Since by definition such intercession is “unutterable,” it must not be used in public worship.
6. We may not understand the groanings of the Spirit, but our Father does.

The Election of the Individual

Rom 8:28 Furthermore, we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called in accordance with his purpose;
 Rom 8:29 because those whom he knew in advance, he also determined in advance would be conformed to the pattern of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers;
 Rom 8:30 and those whom he thus determined in advance, he also called; and those whom he called, he also caused to be considered righteous; and those whom he caused to be considered righteous he also glorified!

1. “everything to work together for the good”
 - a. When one of my brothers came out of the closet, this forced me to re-evaluate my own life and walk (or lack thereof) with God, bringing me to repentance.
2. Predestination vs. Free Will
 - a. The tension (typically framed as Calvinism vs. Arminianism):
 - i. God is clearly sovereign (Rom 9:11), and orders everything according to His will
 - ii. However, He also declares that He doesn’t wish the wicked to die but to turn and repent (Ezk 18:32)
 - iii. So why doesn’t everyone turn and repent?
 - b. A possible solution:
 - i. A sovereign can sovereignly choose to give his subjects choices.
 1. “R. Hanina said, “Everything is in the hands of heaven except fear of heaven as is said, “And now Israel what does your God ask of you except to fear [the Lord your God...?] (Deu. 10:12).” (b. Berakhot 33b, Megillah 25a)
 - a. That is, if God asks for us to fear Him, then He has given that choice to give it or not in our hands.
 - ii. The Sovereign can also choose how much light (revelation) to give:

1. He can pursue the lost lamb (Luke 15:4f),
 2. or He can choose to judicially blind those who have chosen to ignore the light He previously gave them, as He did with Pharaoh and later Israel (Isa 6).
- c. The role of foreknowledge (“for those God *foreknew*”)
- i. Nevertheless, God is Eternal
 1. He knows our choice before we make it
 2. He knows what will influence that choice, if anything
 3. He therefore calls His sheep, those who know His voice and respond to His call (John 10:4, 16)
 - ii. Therefore, He can choose to pursue one person and not another based on His foreknowledge of the results.
- d. Of course, we should not try to delve too deeply into the Divine Will—it is enough to know that God does not turn from His children or withdraw His election or gifts (Rom 11:29f)

God’s Proven Goodness to Us

Rom 8:31 What, then, are we to say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare even his own Son, but gave him up on behalf of us all - is it possible that, having given us his Son, he would not give us everything else too?

Rom 8:33 So who will bring a charge against God's chosen people? Certainly not God - he is the one who causes them to be considered righteous!

Rom 8:34 Who punishes them? Certainly not the Messiah Yeshua, who died and - more than that - has been raised, is at the right hand of God and is actually pleading on our behalf!

1. “He who did not spare even his own Son”
 - a. God has already given up His most treasured possession for us, so what is left that He will begrudge giving us?
2. Bringing charges in the Court of Heaven
 - a. **Zec 3:1-5** - He showed me Y'hoshua the *cohen hagadol* standing before the angel of ADONAI, with the Accuser [Hebrew: Satan] standing at his right to accuse him. ADONAI said to the Accuser, "May ADONAI rebuke you, Accuser! Indeed, may ADONAI, who has made Yerushalayim his choice, rebuke you! Isn't this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"
Y'hoshua was clothed in garments covered with dung; and he was standing

before the angel, who said to those standing in front of him, "Take those filthy garments off of him." Then to him he said, "See, I am taking your guilt away. I will clothe you in fine robes." I said, "They should put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and gave him fine robes to wear, while the angel of ADONAI stood by.

- i. "Angel of the LORD" = Yeshua
- ii. "garments" = atonement, righteousness, worn at the Wedding Feast (Mat 22:11f, Rev 19:7f)

Grace In Tribulation

Rom 8:35 Who will separate us from the love of the Messiah? Trouble? Hardship? Persecution? Hunger? Poverty? Danger? War?

Rom 8:36 As the Tanakh puts it, "For your sake we are being put to death all day long, we are considered sheep to be slaughtered."

Rom 8:37 No, in all these things we are superconquerors, through the one who has loved us.

Rom 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers, neither what exists nor what is coming,

Rom 8:39 neither powers above nor powers below, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which comes to us through the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord.

1. Here Sha'ul prepares his audience for the persecution that he knows is coming by the Lord's own word.
2. "For your sake we are being put to death all day long, we are considered sheep to be slaughtered." (Psa 44:21[22])
 - a. Summary:
 - i. The Psalm begins by recounting that Israel did not win the Land by her own might, but rather by God's providence,
 - ii. so when she fell away from the Holy One, the adversaries that she wasn't strong enough to take on in the first place devoured her.
 - iii. The Psalm is a plea by the faithful remnant who had not turned to idols (vv. 20f) and who had remained true to the Covenant (v. 17), but who nevertheless faced persecution because of the sins of the many (as recounted in the book of Judges).
 - b. In the Talmud (b. Gittin 57b) connects this Psalm
 - i. with the legend of the widow whose seven sons died refusing to bow down to Caesar—the story was originally of the seven sons refusing to bow to Antiochus Epimanes—and

- ii. with the tale of four hundred young people carried off as slaves to Rome who dived into the sea and drowned rather than be used for shameful purposes.
 - iii. In both cases, the suffering of the righteous was caused by the sin of others.
- c. In Sha'ul's thought:
- i. He knows prophetically that the Temple will soon be destroyed,
 - ii. so he tries to prepare his audience once again to prepare to suffer for the sake of the Name because of the actions of the wicked.
 - iii. Sadly, it didn't take: When the Roman Empire persecuted the Jews, the Church sought to distance itself from them:
 1. Forsaking the ceremonial portions of the Torah, starting in the time of Ignatius
 2. Petitioning Emperor Nerva to be considered a separate religion in c. 96 CE
 3. "A survey of Christian literature of the second century bears out that by the time of Hadrian most Christians assumed an attitude of reconciliation towards the empire but toward the Jews they adopted a policy of radical differentiation." (Koch, *Sect* 132)
 - iv. Nevertheless, trying to foster brotherhood and a proper understanding of the Jewish people's role in God's plan is the subject of his next several chapters. It is a shame that the Church, taking those passages out of context, has virtually reversed their meaning.

Chapter 9

Sha'ul's Grief For His People

Rom 9:1 I am speaking the truth - as one who belongs to the Messiah, I do not lie; and also bearing witness is my conscience, governed by the Ruach HaKodesh:

Rom 9:2 my grief is so great, the pain in my heart so constant,

Rom 9:3 that I could wish myself actually under God's curse and separated from the Messiah, if it would help my brothers, my own flesh and blood,

Rom 9:4 the people of Isra'el! They were made God's children, the Sh'khinah has been with them, the covenants are theirs, likewise the giving of the Torah, the Temple service and the promises;

Rom 9:5 the Patriarchs are theirs; and from them, as far as his physical descent is concerned, came the Messiah, who is over all. Praised be ADONAI for ever! Amen.

1. As we go into this section, it is important to note that **Sha'ul's point is not concerned primarily with salvation**, as we will see.
 - a. The assumption that Sha'ul's point here is about salvation has resulted in the complete misunderstanding about his point.
2. Who is Israel?
 - a. This seems an obvious question, but the proponents of the various forms of Replacement Theology (e.g. Covenant Theology) are quick to claim that the Church is "the new Israel" or "spiritual Israel."
 - b. However, the Israel spoken of by Sha'ul in this section can only be the Jewish people.
 - i. In this passage:
 1. They are Sha'ul's kinsmen according to flesh and blood, his race, and are further identified as Israelites, those who are descended from the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and who are also kin to Yeshua
 2. They are not currently in Messiah, or Sha'ul would not be willing to sacrifice so much to help them – this cannot be the Ekklesia
 3. They were made God's children (cf. Exo. 4:22)
 4. The Sh'khinah (Gr. δόξα) was with them, i.e., in the Holy Place
 5. They were the ones given the covenants (plural—Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic), the Torah, and the Temple service, and the promises of God.
 - ii. Elsewhere in this section:
 1. They pursued a Torah of righteousness, but failed in attaining its goal, the Messiah (9:31; cf. 10:1-4, 11:7)
 2. Sha'ul testifies to their zeal for God, though they lack full knowledge (10:2)
 3. They had heard the message of the Gospel already (10:18), but had been predestined to be made zealous by competition with Gentiles who believed in Messiah (10:19f)

4. God had retained a remnant saved by His grace, just as He had in the days of Elijah (11:2-5)
5. Their God-imposed blindness was in order to make an opportunity for the Gentiles, which in turn would arouse Israel's zealously (11:11)
6. In the end, after the full number of the Gentiles had come in, those who were presently enemies of the Gospel because of the Gentiles would all be saved because of God's covenants with the Patriarchs (11:25-29)
7. When that day happened, there would be even greater glory than there is now (11:12, 15)

God's Chosen Line and Pruning the Tree

Rom 9:6 But [the present condition of Isra'el] does not mean that the Word of God has failed. For not everyone from Isra'el is truly part of Isra'el;

Rom 9:7 indeed, not all the descendants are seed of Avraham; rather, "What is to be called your 'seed' will be in Yitz'chak."

Rom 9:8 In other words, it is not the physical children who are children of God, but the children the promise refers to who are considered seed.

Rom 9:9 For this is what the promise said: "At the time set, I will come; and Sarah will have a son."

1. "Not everyone"
 - a. God retained the right to narrow the covenant blood-line, as He did by narrowing the bloodline of Abraham to that of Isaac, and then Jacob.
 - b. God also retains the right to expel those who do not keep certain commandments from the peoplehood of Israel
 - i. This is not an issue of salvation! In the Tanakh, there were many who were not Israelites and yet were saved by faith (Jethro, Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, the 200,000 of Ninevah, etc.).
 - ii. Some of the commands:
 1. Circumcision (Gen. 17)
 2. To keep Passover (specifically, not to eat leaven; Exo 12:15-19), the Sabbath (31:14), and Yom Kippur (specifically, humbling one's self; Lev. 23:29).
 3. Not to eat blood (Lev. 7:27 & 17:10ff)
 4. Not to commit idolatry or occultism (Lev. 20:1ff)

5. Not to commit sexual immorality (Lev. 18 and 20:17-18)
6. Not to profane the Holy Place by knowingly entering while unclean or misusing its implements (Lev. 7, 19:7-8, etc.)
7. Offering sacrifices apart from God's declared Holy Place (Lev. 17:3-9)
8. Sinning "with a high hand"—that is, openly and flagrantly, defiantly, refusing to be cleansed when it is possible (Num. 15:30f, 19:20)

iii. An addition?

1. **Act 3:22f** – “For Moshe himself said, 'ADONAI will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You are to listen to everything he tells you. Everyone who fails to listen to that prophet will be removed from the people and destroyed.’”
 - a. Not rendered this way in any MSS or translation of the Torah.
2. **Deu 18:18f** – “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I order him. Whoever doesn't listen to my words, which he will speak in my name, will have to account for himself to me.”
 - a. “have to account” – lit. “I will require it from him”; the rabbis interpreted this as having the death penalty (*Chumash*, per Rashi), probably based on the same word (אָדַרְשׁ) being used in Gen. 9:5)
3. Kefa was not misrepresenting the passage, but rather making a simple connection – one who rebelled against Israel's King “with a high hand” (as those who had witnessed His miracles and fulfillment of prophecy would be doing) would be cut off from the Kingdom.
4. However, this does not amount to a permanent “cutting off” of the Jewish people in general, since they neither know Yeshua as the Prophet nor have received Kefa's *midrash* on the passage.

c. This is not only a “Christian” distinction.

- i. *Pirke Avot* 5:19 draws a distinction between Jews who are “disciples of Abraham”—practicing generosity, modesty, and humility—and Jews who are “disciples of Balaam”—practicing a begrudging spirit, arrogance, and pride. The former inherit the World to Come, but “the

disciples of Balaam the wicked inherit Gehenna and go down to the Pit of Destruction.”

- ii. Likewise, the Mishnah (Sanhedron 10:1-2) states that “all Israelites have a share in the World to Come,” but then goes on to list those who would be excluded—those who denied the Resurrection, the Torah’s Divine origin, Epicurians, etc.

2. Physical vs. promise

- a. Ishmael was also a physical child of Abraham, but was rejected in favor of Isaac by the Eternal One. **This was not a condemnation to hell, but a rejection of him for the particular purpose of being a patriarch of Israel!**

- b. **Gal 4:21-31** - Tell me, you who want to be in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism, don't you hear what the Torah itself says? It says that Avraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. The one by the slave woman was born according to the limited capabilities of human beings, but the one by the free woman was born through the miracle-working power of God fulfilling his promise.

Now, to make a *midrash* on these things: the two women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai and bears children for slavery - this is Hagar. Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Yerushalayim, for she serves as a slave along with her children. But the Yerushalayim above is free, and she is our mother; for the *Tanakh* says, "Rejoice, you barren woman who does not bear children! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the deserted wife will have more children than the one whose husband is with her!" (Isa 54:1)

You, brothers, like Yitz'chak, are children referred to in a promise of God. But just as then the one born according to limited human capability persecuted the one born through the Spirit's supernatural power, so it is now. Nevertheless, what does the *Tanakh* say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for by no means will the son of the slave woman inherit along with the son of the free woman!" So, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

- i. This is a very unusual parallel to make; most likely Sha’ul was responding to a charge that the Gentile believers were like children of Hagar while the Judaizers were children of Sarah.
- ii. Hagar vs. Sarah – When God promised Abraham a son, he tried to “work for” a son with Hagar, when God meant to *give* him one through Sarah.

1. Therefore, those who are “in Messiah,” whether Jew or Gentile, are the promised children of Abraham, who was promised to be a blessing and a father to *many* nations (Gen. 12:3, 17:4-5).

- a. This does not impinge on God’s special calling to the nation of Israel, descended from Isaac and Jacob, which He called His firstborn (Exo. 4:22)

2. Those who tried to *earn* what God had offered by becoming circumcised (Jewish) and keeping the Torah to a certain level of strictness had put themselves in slavery to the children of Abraham as Hagar was in slavery to him.
- iii. Yerushalayim – the contrast is not between the “earthly Jerusalem” and the heavenly, but between the *present* (vũ v) Jerusalem and that from above.
- iv. Covenants – the issue was not “law vs. grace” in the sense of keeping the Torah being equivalent to being “under the law,” but rather in the sense of the internal attitude of a son vs. that of a servant, serving out of love vs. serving out of fear.

The Election of Nations and Roles

Rom 9:10 And even more to the point is the case of Rivkah; for both her children were conceived in a single act with Yitz'chak, our father;

Rom 9:11 and before they were born, before they had done anything at all, either good or bad (so that God's plan might remain a matter of his sovereign choice, not dependent on what they did, but on God, who does the calling),

Rom 9:12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

Rom 9:13 This accords with where it is written, "Ya'akov I loved, but Esav I hated."

1. Once again, the issue Sha'ul is discussing is not primarily an election of salvation, but an election of calling and role
 - a. There is nothing in Scripture that tells us that Esav was rejected in the sense of being condemned to Gehenna
 - b. Rather, the fight was over the rights of the firstborn, which would bring with it the right to bring forth the nation of Israel.
2. Sha'ul is also not speaking of individuals here, as Calvinists assume, but of the nations descended from Ya'akov and Esav
 - a. Esav the individual never served Ya'akov the individual—in fact, Ya'akov sent tribute to and bowed down to him (Gen. 32-33).
 - b. **Mal 1:2-5** - "I love you," says ADONAI. But you ask, "How do you show us your love?" ADONAI answers, "'Esav was Ya'akov's brother. Yet I loved Ya'akov but hated 'Esav. I made his mountains desolate and gave his territory to desert jackals." Edom says, "We are beaten down now, but we will come back and rebuild the ruins." ADONAI-Tzva'ot answers, "They can build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Land of Wickedness, the people with whom ADONAI is permanently angry. You will see it and say, 'ADONAI is great, even beyond the borders of Isra'el.'"

3. Love vs. hate - a classic example of Jewish hyperbole
 - a. **Luke 14:26** - "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers and his sisters, yes, and his own life besides, he cannot be my *talmid*."
 - b. See also Gen
 - c. The point is not to hate in the sense of actively seeking harm, but in the sense that the object of our love receives so much of our attention that the other we seem to "hate" in comparison.

4. Sha'ul's point, continued in the next chapter, is
 - a. Many of those in his day who were physically of Israel were not of Israel in heart and who had *individually* been cut off from the people because of particular sins
 - i. Since many of these were Israel's then-present leadership, this resulted in the nation's general rejection of her King.
 - b. This was not a failure of the Word of God, however, for God had preordained exactly this eventuality.
 - c. God had sovereignly chosen to blind Israel as a whole so that *all* of Abraham's children—all of the *many* nations that God promised Him—could come to Him through the Messiah Yeshua.
 - d. This is not the first time that God has chosen one set of individuals over another for a particular mission and role—in fact, He did the same when choosing Israel in the first place.
 - e. As we will see developed through the rest of this section (ch. 9-11), this blindness and period of being removed from her place of primacy in the Covenant is not forever, only until the Gentile mission is finished.

God's Sovereign Right

Rom 9:14 So are we to say, "It is unjust for God to do this"? Heaven forbid!

Rom 9:15 For to Moshe he says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will pity whom I pity."

Rom 9:16 Thus it doesn't depend on human desires or efforts, but on God, who has mercy.

Rom 9:17 For the Tanakh says to Pharaoh, "It is for this very reason that I raised you up, so that in connection with you I might demonstrate my power, so that my name might be known throughout the world."

Rom 9:18 So then, he has mercy on whom he wants, and he hardens whom he wants.

Rom 9:19 But you will say to me, "Then why does he still find fault with us? After all, who resists his will?"

Rom 9:20 Who are you, a mere human being, to talk back to God? Will what is formed say to him who formed it, "Why did you make me this way?"e

Rom 9:21 Or has the potter no right to make from a given lump of clay this pot for honorable use and that one for dishonorable?

A Hard Grace

Rom 9:22 Now what if God, even though he was quite willing to demonstrate his anger and make known his power, patiently put up with people who deserved punishment and were ripe for destruction?

Rom 9:23 What if he did this in order to make known the riches of his glory to those who are the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory -

Rom 9:24 that is, to us, whom he called not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles?

Hoshea's Children

Rom 9:25 As indeed he says in Hoshea, "Those who were not my people I will call my people; her who was not loved I will call loved;

Rom 9:26 and in the very place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the living God!"

The Remnant

Rom 9:27 But Yesha'yahu, referring to Isra'el, cries out, "Even if the number of people in Isra'el is as large as the number of grains of sand by the sea, only a remnant will be saved.

Rom 9:28 For ADONAI will fulfill his word on the earth with certainty and without delay."

Rom 9:29 Also, as Yesha'yahu said earlier, "If ADONAI-Tzva'ot had not left us a seed, we would have become like S'dom, we would have resembled 'Amora."

The Stumbling Block

Rom 9:30 So, what are we to say? This: that Gentiles, even though they were not striving for righteousness, have obtained righteousness; but it is a righteousness grounded in trusting!

Rom 9:31 However, Isra'el, even though they kept pursuing a Torah that offers righteousness, did not reach what the Torah offers.

Rom 9:32 Why? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting but as if it were grounded in doing legalistic works. They stumbled over the stone that makes people stumble.i

Rom 9:33 As the Tanakh puts it, "Look, I am laying in Tziyon a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will trip them up. But he who rests his trust on it will not be humiliated."