

45. Review of Chapter 8 - Two quotes that begin and end the chapter capture the essence of what is written. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*” and “*neither death nor life..., nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* These book ends of chapter 8 appropriately give us insight into what the chapter is about.

Through Jesus Christ we have been set free from our old life of sin. Where once we had been held captive by the flesh, we now exercise freedom according to the Holy Spirit who enables us to live a life pleasing to God. There is no longer any condemnation because we have been adopted as children of God, brothers and sisters to Christ, with whom we shall share the inheritance as well as the sufferings, that we may be glorified along with Him. And while suffering is to be expected, it isn't worth comparing to our future glory.

In the meantime, all of creation is eagerly waiting with us for the full redemption and return of Christ as persecution and trouble in the world increases. Yet we are not left alone as the Spirit intercedes on our behalf, and we have this solid promise in verse 28, “*that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose*”. As such we can rest assured knowing that our salvation and sanctification have been secured because what He determines to do will always come to fruition. No matter what happens in this world, those whom God has called will be glorified.

What more is left to say? If God is with us, who could possibly be against us? The world may try to condemn us and convict us, but God is the one who justifies and Christ is the one who will judge. Therefore nothing the world brings against us can stick. Our sins have already been forgiven and we will be made perfect one day. Thus no matter what troubles we face, we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God as our salvation rests comfortably in the work and person of Jesus Christ, who lives forever and is seated at the right hand of God.

46. Chapter 9 introduction: Having just taught about the doctrine of election and the security of the believer, Paul now begins to prove and explain how this is true while anticipating the natural objections and questions that would arise in regards to Israel and to anyone who might consider the doctrine of election more thoroughly. The first question/objection is found in verse 6. What about Israel? If Christians have the comfort of a secure salvation why doesn't that apply to Israel? Aren't they the chosen people of God? Does this mean the promises of God are nullified because of the new covenant and that His word has come to nothing? The second question/objection is in verse 14. Is it really fair that God chooses some and not others to be justified despite those who are saved having done nothing to deserve it? Is there unrighteousness with God? And finally the third question/objection is found in verse 19. If the doctrine of election is true and God sovereignly chooses whom He will save, why am I still held accountable? Why does God still find fault?
47. 9:1-5 Paul is about to jump into all of this but the subject is not a lighthearted conversation. It isn't easy for him to know that many of his fellow Israelites will be left behind and condemned to a fiery future. So we see a break in his teaching regarding election to express the sorrow he

feels within himself for his brethren in the flesh. He wants his readers to know that this is a serious matter and one that is difficult for him as well.

- a. 9:1-2 In what appears to be a strange aside, Paul stops his line of thought to affirm that what he is saying is true. He not only confirms the truth, but doubles down and triples down with layers of affirmation. Why would he need to affirm this at all? Because what he is about to say in the following verses is almost unbelievable.
 - i. In Christ, he is not lying and his conscience in the Spirit bears witness to this fact. He is continually grieving for the lost, particularly the Jews here mentioned. His heart is burdened and we know this must be true, for one because it is inspired writing, but also because his actions back up every word. He consistently put himself on the line, in harm's way to reach those who needed to hear the gospel. And the fact that his countrymen rejected the gospel, caused much sorrow.
 - ii. One thing to take from this is our own attitudes in regards to those who are unsaved. Are we grieving those who are lost? Are we careless and indifferent? We may be chosen, but we have no idea who is or is not one of Christ's sheep. We are not only commanded to spread the gospel (Mat 28:19-20), but we should also feel compelled to alleviate the needless suffering of our lost brothers and sisters wandering alone in this crazy world.
 - iii. Another thing to point out is how he is able to soften the blow of what might sound harsh to unbelieving ears. The truth might be harsh, but we can still speak this truth in love; with compassion and understanding. There may be times to come down hard, but our hearts should be understanding that those who are outside the sheep fold are confused and blinded and what they are being called to is the love of Christ. Not a pompous "know it all" attitude of proving others wrong.
- b. 9:3 He now expresses this shocking statement to shine a light on the reality within himself. He knows it is impossible to be separated from the love of Christ as we just read in the previous chapter, (8:38-39) but there is such anguish within his heart, he would be willing to sacrifice himself if it meant those he loved would be saved.
 - i. Accursed from Christ - What is being said is that he is willing to be cut off from Christ if it means his countrymen would be united. He would suffer hell if his fellow Jews would experience heaven. Now we see why he needed to qualify the preceding statements.
 - ii. This kind of heart and compassion is not something we can just muster up within ourselves. It is a gift of God and something that only comes from continued fellowship in Christ and a thorough understanding of the depths of His love and gospel truth. Paul was under attack from these people, ridiculed and persecuted, yet still put himself on the line for their sake emulating the love of Christ.
 - iii. Paul is writing this in regards to his fellow Jews, but we are all acquainted with people to mourn for in our personal lives. Countrymen, brothers or sisters by blood, old friends, extended relatives, co-workers and even unsaved church members. We all know someone or likely many people who will not experience the saving grace of God. The question is what are we going to do about it? How do we feel about it? Have our hearts grown cold? Are we asking God for compassion and the opportunity to share the gospel or the courage to correct faulty understanding?

- c. 9:4-5 Clarifying who he is speaking about, he directly addresses the Israelites. But why is Israel so special and what is the big deal that they have rejected the gospel? We see here a list of privileges they have received from the time God called them to be a people. Reminiscent of chapter 3: "What advantage has the Jew?" Much in every way.
- i. Adoption as sons (Exo 4:22, Hos 11:1) This does not mean they are saved in the same way mentioned in chapter 8:15. But it is referring to God's care and provision as a firstborn son. Out of all the nations of the earth, they were cared for above all.
 - ii. The glory - the special revelation of God to Israel. He made Himself known to them in a way no other nation or people had known Him. He not only gave to them the gospel, but also instructed them in the ways he desired to be worshiped. As well as directly revealing His power through miracles and the shekinah glory. (Ex 13:20-22, 40:34)
 - iii. The covenants - the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. God entered into a contractual relationship with Israel and swore by His own name that His word would remain firm and not be revoked. (Gen 15:4-5, Deut 29, 2 Sam 7)
 - iv. The giving of the law - Scripture, the oracles of God (Rom 3:2). The moral law; the ten commandments, the ceremonial law; the sacrificial system, the civil law; the system of governance for their nation and surrounding nations.
 - v. The service of God - The entire ceremonial and sacrificial system. From the cleansing of the priests to the slaughtering of animals for the forgiveness of sins and offerings to God, all of it was a type and shadow of the sacrifice of Jesus who would be made our perfect sacrifice and priest.
 - vi. Promises - Specifically the prophecies of the coming Messiah and future kingdom came to and through their prophets and were delivered to their people.
 - vii. Of whom are the fathers - The birth of the nation in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - viii. From whom came Christ according to the flesh - Jesus was born a Jew in the line of king David. A literal brother/countryman in the flesh. As Paul says in verse one.
 - ix. So we can see the privileges are many, but this also places a heavier responsibility on them as well. "to whom much is given, from him much will be required" The Jew has a greater expectation to see, hear and understand the truth in Jesus than does the rest of the world. They were waiting for the messiah, yet rejected Him. All will be held guilty, but greater condemnation will come upon those who have greater knowledge.
 - x. Finally He ends this interjection after mentioning Christ, a Jew according to the flesh, but no ordinary Jew, He is over all and the eternally blessed God. (John 1:1, Col 1:16)
48. 9:6-13 We now move on to the practical aspect of election. Though Paul's sorrow is deep and painful, God is still sovereign and will save whom He chooses to save. But if the Jews have rejected the gospel, and they are the chosen people, does this invalidate His promises to Abraham and the patriarchs? Not at all. For we see that not all of Abraham's descendants are children of God. Thus it is not the fact that God's word has taken no effect, but that they did not properly understand God's intentions. Moving forward, Paul will begin to reconcile the misunderstanding of these promises and the Jews heretofore special privileges. Beginning with the most basic and obvious fact that Isaac was chosen and not Ishmael though they were both Abraham's seed according to the flesh.

- a. 9:6 The word of God has always and will always accomplish its purpose. (Isa 55:10-11) Therefore if it appears to us that something is amiss, the problem is on our end and we must not question Him in anger, but search His word for clarity and understanding. Oftentimes, fragile faith is cast into doubt when sad or evil events appear in our lives. But that does not mean God is a liar when He says that all things work together for our good. Or that His promises are nullified because we are confused. There are many examples of this in Scripture. Joseph, Job and Jesus... The depth of our faith correlates with the depth of our peace. The more we trust Him, the more we will experience His Joy.
- i. It's not that the word of God has taken no effect - He is primarily referring to the promises given to Israel. This couldn't be the case under any circumstance. Num 23:19 reads: "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" God does not lie, He does not sin and He does not make mistakes. If God has said something will happen, it will happen. Lack of faith or knowledge does not nullify this.
 - ii. The only reason any of these questions are brought forth is because there is a lack of understanding. The Old Testament saints did not have the full revelation and much of their prophecies, shadows and types were mysteries until Christ came and things were revealed that had been hidden. But now that Christ has been revealed, there is no excuse and Paul will use Old Testament passages to prove his point. 15 times.
 1. Verse 7 - Gen 21:12, verse 9 - Gen 18:10, verse 12 - Gen 25:23, verse 13 - Mal 1:2-3, verse 15 - Exo 33:19, verse 17 - Exo 9:16, verse 25 - Hos 2:23, verse 26 - Hos 1:10, verse 27 - Isa 10:22, Gen 22:17, Hos 1:10, verse 28 - Isa 10:23, verse 29 - Isa 1:9, verse 33 - Isa 28:16, Isa 8:14.
 - iii. They are not all Israel who are Israel - Paul has already addressed this idea back in chapter 2:28-29. A name or title is merely an external sign and one that is not necessarily accurate. He is highlighting this truth the same way Christ did in Mat 7:23. Not all professing Christians are truly Christians. Not all Israel is truly Israel. Not everyone in the church is saved.
 - iv. There is an external all encompassing group of people who appear to be part of the group and a smaller group of people who truly define the essence of the group's purpose. There is a physical Israel and a spiritual Israel. God has chosen the nation of Israel to be the instrument of divine display, but He has only ever saved the remnant.
- b. 9:7 Nor are they children (of God) because they are the seed of Abraham - He is reinforcing what he just said. Phi 3:3 reads "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Just because they had Abraham for a father doesn't mean they will be saved. (Mat 3:7-10) As John the Baptist said "God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." Despite what the Jews believed, God never promised that every physical descendant of Abraham would be saved. Only those who respond appropriately and produce fruit worthy of repentance will be saved. The same can be said today regarding children of Christian parents. No one is born a believer or born into the kingdom of God, but every individual must be born again.
- i. We read in Rom 4:9-12 that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised "that he might be the father of all those who believe," and in 4:13 we read "the promise that he

would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." It is faith in God that makes us children of Abraham. Just as it is faith in Christ which makes us children of God.

- ii. But "In Isaac your seed shall be called" ([Gen21:12](#))- Here is the most obvious rebuttal to those who solely rely on their status as physical descendants of Abraham. From the very beginning there was a division in status and not every ancestor of Abraham was chosen to be saved. Isaac was chosen over Ishamel. Though Ishmael received temporal blessings, Isaac received eternal blessings. God did not extend the promise through Ishmael, but through Isaac despite Ishmael being his son in the flesh.
 1. This proves two things. First it proves that the grace of God is not passed down through blood. If this were the case, both Isaac and Ishmael would have been saved. It would also imply that God must overlook any and every transgression against Him for the sake of the bloodline no matter how serious the crime and whether or not repentance was evident for those transgressions.
 2. The second thing it proves is that the promise God made to Abraham, that he would be a God to Abraham and to his seed, was not an all encompassing blanket statement, but rather a promise to be conferred with conditions, and those sovereignly determined by God. Abraham was promised descendants as numerable as the stars, but "In Isaac your seed shall be called." It could have been Ishmael just as easily, but God chose to establish this covenant according to His own purpose.
- c. 9:8-9 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Rom 8:14) Clarifying the meaning of it all, he lays out a more precise explanation of what he has been saying all along. From the very beginning God's plan was not simply to raise children of the flesh, but children of faith in His word. His word did not fail to have an effect, but was only to be established through the children of the promise. Ishmael was born to Hagar according to the flesh exactly as Sarah and Abraham expected should happen for Hagar was of the age to conceive. There was nothing special about this, nor was there any reason why Abraham would have to trust in God to believe that would happen. But the promise was that "God would come" and Sarah would have a son, a miracle requiring the supernatural intervention of God.
 - i. Notice the comparison of the representative children. Types and figures representing multiple things. First as those who either trust in themselves for justification or trust in God. Ishmael was a child born of the flesh. Though God promised Abraham would have descendants as numerable as the stars, ([Gen 15:4-5](#)) they didn't wait on God and took things into their own hands, committing adultery along the way. Whereas Isaac was the child born through the promise and power of God, as it is today with everyone born of the spirit. It's not "good people" that are saved, but those who trust in the promise of God and His Son.
 - ii. Additionally, [Gal 4:22-31](#) again describes the two lines of descendants as representative of those born in the flesh and those born of the promise. However in this sense, it is as those born as slaves under the law in the flesh and those who have been set free in Christ through the promise.

- iii. The irony in this situation is that the Jews readily accepted the fact that the promise was passed down through Isaac and not Ishmael, yet clung to the idea that Abraham was their father and that was all they needed.
- d. 9:10 Building upon his case he now presents Isaacs' children. Unlike Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau were born through the same mother and father in the very same pregnancy. It might have been supposed or argued that Ishmael didn't have a proper claim on the inheritance of his father, but that argument clearly fails in the following generation. A situation that still occurs today, one sibling may be saved but another lost.
- e. 9:11-12 While Jacob and Esau were still in their mother's womb, incapable of choosing good or evil, God had already chosen who would be elevated and honored. And this He did as to His own purpose, that His word (contrast v6) might stand according to election.
 - i. Not of works but of Him who calls - This case, perhaps more than any other, highlights God's sovereignty in salvation. It has nothing to do with our works, or how well we follow the law. We can do nothing to deserve salvation. But God doesn't choose us for the things we do or the people we help. He chooses us according to election that His word might stand, that His promises will be fulfilled, that His glory be made known..
 - ii. "The older shall serve the younger." ([Gen 25:23](#)) - A complete reversal of the way things should be, something that no one would expect to happen. And many times God has chosen the weak or the lame to make His power and or purpose known. So Paul extrapolates on this event to show that God's plan and purpose has already been determined. Our salvation is according to Him alone. He chooses who will be saved according to His predetermined purpose and then calls us in due time to turn to Him.
- f. 9:13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." - On the surface we complete the thought that has been presented. If you recall, the purpose of this argument is to back up Paul's claim regarding predestination. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined"... "whom He predestined, these He also called". The children had not yet seen the light of day, but God from eternity past (foreknew) had already determined who He would set His favor on. And Jacob was loved, while Esau hated.
 - i. There was nothing in Jacob to earn this favor. He was a sinner just like everyone else. He treated Esau poorly withholding food in exchange for the birthright and deceived his father to receive a blessing meant for his brother. Yet this is the event that changed the dynamic of their relationship. And as we just read previously, God predetermined this to happen and told their mother that the older would serve the younger.
 - ii. We have mentioned this previously, but when he says Esau was hated, this does not mean in any sense that God predestined Esau and his people to be condemned to hell. Though the Edomites became an enemy to national Israel, the quote is used to show the contrasting difference between divine favor and lack thereof.
 - iii. This quote is taken from [Mal 1:2-3](#). And from this we can see that the focus is not on Jacob and Esau as individuals, but as nations. Which further demonstrates the point made in verse 7. Not every descendant of Abraham was meant for salvation, nor every descendant of Isaac. And thus we can further reason that not every descendant of Jacob was meant for salvation either and so his point is thoroughly made. "For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel."

- iv. The exact meaning behind Paul's usage of this scripture is disputed. In the sense that he used a scripture clearly referencing the two nations to complete this line of thought. However, it seems reasonable that we may apply this further down the line in regards to the Jewish nation and the Christian church. The Jews represented by Esau as the older brother who had all the special privileges granted to him for no particular reason outside of God's good grace, squandered these privileges and threw away what was rightfully theirs. Meanwhile the Christian church filled with Gentiles began to assume those special privileges. The authority of Scripture, the royal priesthood, the favor of God etc.

49.:14-18 At this point it should be clear to everyone that God chooses whom He will save and who He will reject for no discernible reason to our human minds. Only to the point that it serves His secret will and purpose. Paul's use of Old Testament Scripture proves this to be true even from the earliest days of the Jewish people. But this naturally raises a question to human reasoning. Does this mean it's all arbitrary? Does God really just pick and choose who will be saved and who will be sent to hell? How is that fair? Is God unrighteous because of this? Certainly not! For God is sovereign and has every right to do as He sees fit with His creation.

- a. 9:14 This looming objection will always be raised by those who hate God as well as those who love God. It is natural to wonder and want to understand the complexities of God's sovereign will. Paul gets to the heart of the issue and what people really want to know, does this mean that God is unrighteous? But the question is often stated in other ways. "Does this mean He chooses some for heaven and some for hell? How is that fair? Or by the detractors, it becomes an accusation against His righteousness. "No just God would arbitrarily pick and choose who goes to heaven and hell." But the starting premise is wrong for both the believer and unbeliever and there is a big misunderstanding.
 - i. Certainly not - God forbid - far from it - A strong denial of this accusation. First of all, God is the standard of justice and therefore He cannot be unjust. But to move beyond this, God does not owe salvation to anyone. When the question of fairness is raised, what is truly fair is that everyone is condemned to hell. We don't want "fairness", we want mercy. God is under no obligation to us. We are the sinner/criminals. If He bestows mercy upon some and not others it His prerogative to do so, but we have no right to question His righteousness and justice.
 - ii. Furthermore, when it comes to fairness, God showed His unwillingness to destroy righteous people in His bargain with Abraham over Sodom. "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25) If any were truly righteous, God would spare them.
- b. 9:15 Paul now explains this concept with another scripture reference. (Exo 33:19) In this passage Moses asks The Lord for two things, 1. that His presence goes with them so that the world would know Israel has found favor and that they are separate from the world. 2. Moses also asks to see His glory. God responds favorably to both, but then follows up with Paul's quote. The point and purpose of such a response is to say that God does not owe Moses or the people anything, but it is only according to His good pleasure.
 - i. Notice the repetitive use of the word "I". God is referring to Himself over and over that it would be made all the more clear, the decision is His and only His.

- ii. I will have mercy and compassion on whomever I will - These two words are very similar and can even be synonymous, however there is a difference. Mercy is defined as: Compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power... whereas compassion is defined as: sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.
- iii. Generally speaking mercy is referring to God's intervening actions while compassion is in regards to the attitude behind it. So in this regard it is God's compassion that causes His Mercy. Speaking in terms of election, all sinners are in need of this mercy though they do not realize it for sin is the root cause of all suffering. Yet God is sovereign to choose whomever He will, whether to give liberally or to withhold tightly. This does not make it unjust, neither does it call into question any negative aspect of character. They are His gifts to give and no one has a right to demand them.
- c. 9:16 Being that all of this is a matter of God's divine will, Paul now infers the logical conclusion to the matter. Whatever good grace may come from God to mankind has nothing to with man's will or efforts. But comes entirely from the depths of God's mercy and compassion. (Eph 2:8-9) Our salvation is entirely and exclusively a sovereign act of God apart from and outside of our wishes and desires.
 - i. Mankind is not even capable of desiring salvation apart from His mercy and grace. We are dead in our trespasses and He grants us the repentance and faith we need for Jesus is the "author and finisher of our faith." (Heb 12:2) We cannot will or run in the direction of God without His sovereign hand in our life. (Rom 3:10-12)
 - ii. Applying this to Paul's underlying argument, the reason a greater portion of Israel was left to perish in unbelief while the Gentiles were brought into God's grace, had nothing to do with the Gentiles themselves. They certainly were not better, neither did they run or will for this grace, but sat in darkness until the light shown upon them from above.
- d. 9:17 Quoting Exo 9:16, Paul now addresses the example of Pharaoh, king of Egypt back in the time of Moses. Pharaoh here represents all those who are passed over by God and not granted His grace and mercy. We can see in the surrounding context of the quote that God could have destroyed the Egyptians at any point with pestilence, but instead chose to demonstrate His power through Pharaoh's stubbornness.
- e. For this very purpose - We can see that even this is not a passive action on behalf of God, but there is a purpose behind it all. God does not act randomly, but has designed all things to work together for His purpose. Proverbs 16:4 "The Lord has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom..."... This does not mean God is the author of evil or of sin, but He is sovereignly in control of all things and His plan allows evil and sin to remain on this earth to be used for His purpose.
 - i. Notice again, the first person pronouns. I and my... used four times, emphasizing that it is indeed God who is choosing to act. It isn't something that He is reacting to, but He chose to do so. Also of note, it wasn't satan who raised up Pharaoh. Though Pharaoh was certainly evil and this likely aligned with satan's desire, this was God's plan.
 - ii. I have raised you up - It was God who raised Pharaoh up, made him famous and gave him a powerful kingdom. It was also God who hardened his heart and withdrew any softening grace.

- iii. That I may show my power in you - All of this was necessary to demonstrate the full might and power of God. If Pharaoh was a no name upstart, the escape from Egypt wouldn't have been so spectacular. Yet in accordance with His divine plan God's power, wrath, vengeance, fury, long suffering and patience were all on display through Pharaoh's stubbornness. He was raised up so that the people of God would be released in the exodus in a mighty way.
 - iv. That my name may be declared in all the earth - It is safe to say that God's plan was successful as we are still talking about Pharaoh thousands of years later. It is a wonder and a blessing to be on this end of His plan and see the lasting effects His word has. So let this be a reminder to us in matters of doubt or uncertainty when we see evil people profiting in some unholy way.
 - f. 9:18 The fitting conclusion to this matter. Is God unrighteous or unfair in choosing some over others? Psalm 115:3 "our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases." God is sovereign over all. He is free to have mercy if He so desires and He is free to harden hearts if He so desires. (Rom 1:24,26,28) God is not a man that we may question. Neither is He indebted to us, but the other way around. We owe Him everything and have sinned against Him countless times. Therefore His grace is not something we deserve. Salvation is a blessed and merciful gift, while our damnation is our own doing and we have no one but ourselves to blame.
50. 9:19-21 We now come to the third question/objection in regards to the doctrine of election. If God is sovereign to choose whom He will, why does He still find fault with me? But Paul has no patience for this arrogant questioning and responds strongly. God is the sovereign creator over all things, who has the right to question Him? We are but dust and clay in His hands.
- a. 9:19 This will be a natural question for many people. If salvation is a matter of God sovereignly choosing whom He will or won't save, then "why am I still held accountable? Why does God still find fault?" The obvious answer is because you are a sinner. Yet, then the response would be, "But if God has hardened my heart and it is possible for Him to open my eyes, why wouldn't He? Or at least why would He blame me for not seeing, that which is impossible for me to see?" This kind of questioning should be expected for it is a burden of curiosity to desire this knowledge. But what it all comes down to is humility. Who is asking and why are they asking? Demanding these answers instead of pleading with God for His mercy is one of the reasons we don't deserve it in the first place.
 - b. 9:20 Paul responds as perturbed by the arrogance and insolence of such a question. "Who are you to question God Almighty? You are a man and foolish one at that to question your maker. Do you sit in the counsels of the heavenly courtroom? Are you able to make a man of your own creation? What gives you the right to question Him? God is our master. We are His servants. Servants do not question their master, but the other way around. Yet it is even more arrogant than this, for we are nothing, but the dust of the earth without him. We are lumps of clay and have only been given life through His loving grace. Do we have any right to question why He made us like this? (Jer 18:6) In Jeremiah, God uses this illustration to teach Israel the same kind of lesson. He is the supreme craftsman and may raise up, discard or even destroy His work whenever He sees fit to do so.
 - c. 9:21 The rhetorical question is begged, can the potter do as he pleases with the clay or does he have no such right? The question is drawn from the reference back in verse 11.

Two children from the same womb, one to love the other to hate. Sometimes the lumps of clay make beautiful pieces of art to highlight grace and gentleness, other times pots are made to carry refuse, slop and garbage. Both are made from the same clay, yet He who molds the clay is the one who fashions the purpose. And as all the clay is His to begin with, He may pick and choose which vessels to make as well as how many of each kind He chooses to make.

51. 9:22-24 He now makes application of these facts and distinguishes between the two types of vessels in a hypothetical presentation. Those prepared for destruction and those prepared beforehand for glory. Yet, as he has been making the point throughout this epistle, such glory is no longer exclusively for the Jews, but the Gentiles as well.
- a. 9:22 As for those vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, we can recall the argument began with this sentiment (Rom 2:3-5). And now we have an explanation of sorts as to why any of this is allowed at all. Though it is not a thorough explanation but more of a thinking exercise..."what if " Since God is the potter molding His clay as He sees fit, there must be a logical reason He puts up with the sinfulness of mankind and the blatant disrespect.
 - i. To demonstrate His wrath - God is mighty and powerful, He is angry with sinners and there is no apology required or excuse to be made for this. Our creator deserves our respect and those who refuse to acknowledge this will be made to acknowledge this. Atheists will often argue against this in that they would not choose to serve a "vengeful" god. The problem for them is they don't get to choose their creator and such is why they attempt to make their own idols. However, it is important to remember that this wrath is entirely just. Scary though it may be, it is deserved and God would cease to be the standard of justice if He didn't destroy those vessels full of wrath.
 - ii. To make His power known - To some degree we know the capability of His power. As hard as it is for us to imagine, we understand that He created the entire universe. His word enables existence. His breath gives us life. With a thought He can stop our hearts or open the earth to swallow entire cities. We know this, but the world denies this and causes trouble for those who proclaim the goodness of our Lord. But the glory of His power will be made known in the day of wrath. (2 Thess 1:3-10) "The eternal damnation of sinners will be an abundant demonstration of the power of God; for he will act in it himself immediately, his wrath preying as it were upon guilty consciences, and his arm stretched out totally to destroy their well-being, and yet at the same instant wonderfully to preserve the being of the creature." - Matthew Henry's Commentary
 - iii. He endured much longsuffering - Like all of His other traits and characteristics, His patience is divine and unparalleled. He didn't destroy us for our first sin, our tenth sin or even our one hundredth sin against Him. (2 Peter 3:3-9) To us, we see this blessed grace and mercy, but to those who are perishing, it is rejected. They scoff and "willfully forget."
 - iv. Prepared for destruction - "For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse". (Rom 1:20) Sinners have no excuse, but suppress the truth and God allows this, giving them over to their own debased thoughts as He did with Pharaoh, enduring with much longsuffering while they harden their own hearts against Him to thoroughly demonstrate His wrath, power, patience and justice.

- b. 9:23-24 In stark contrast to those vessels of wrath, we now look at the vessels of mercy. The idea being presented is a continuing thought. As if to say “What if God allowed all that sinfulness to continue so that those who are saved, those vessels of mercy would know and understand the riches of His glory?”
- i. First and foremost, those vessels of mercy would understand they are vessels of mercy. With nothing obvious to distinguish themselves from the vessels of wrath, those who have been saved will thoroughly understand it was because of nothing they did, but that everything they have, their joy and happiness is only according to the mercy of God.
 - ii. The riches of His glory are made known - The glory of God is displayed throughout all of creation. And His goodness is bestowed upon everyone while they are on this earth. Despite our sins, “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Mat 5:45) But His glory and goodness will be magnified to the utmost when compared against the power of His wrath. If there were no destruction, salvation and mercy wouldn’t appear as wonderful as it is. And therefore the vessel of mercy is now mightily grateful, honored and humbled by knowing the fate of the vessel of wrath. What if God endured all that sinfulness for this very purpose? Who are we to question the wisdom and sovereignty of God almighty?
 - iii. Prepared beforehand - It is important to remember that He prepared all of this beforehand. The wrath, the mercy, destruction and salvation. Let us not forget to praise His infinite wisdom and the masterful craftsmanship of world events to fulfill His purposes. What He began with Abraham and the Israelites truly began in eternity past before the world was formed. And now extends to all the earth so that everyone who believes in Jesus will be counted as children of Abraham. Jew and Gentile alike.
52. 9:25-29 Up to this point Paul has clarified the promises made to the patriarchs “they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” And proven the divine sovereignty of God in the matter of election by highlighting the predetermined nature of it all as we see with Jacob and Esau, as well as with Pharaoh. “He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.” And having once again mentioned the Gentiles as part of God’s salvation, he now determines to prove this with scripture as well, quoting the prophets Hosea and Isaiah.
- a. 9:25-26 First demonstrating that the Gentiles were meant to be brought into the sheepfold, he quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10. Though they were not designated as the people of God, the Gentiles would benefit from Israel’s fall and become the beloved of God just as Israel once had. That is not to say the Gentiles have taken their spot, but that they also would be considered beloved. And looking at the book of Hosea we can see the reason for this is because Israel was playing the harlot and departing from God. Similar to what Paul says in Rom 11:20 “Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith.” But praise God and His mercy for “if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in,” once more.
 - b. Notice also, the latter half of verse 26 reads “In the place where it was said.....there they shall be called.’ Indicating there was no need to be affiliated with the Jews or even be in Jerusalem to obtain this privilege. ([John 4:21-24](#)) As Jesus said, “the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.” (John 4:21) God will call children from all over the world. Even if they know nothing of the Jewish religion, they may be saved so long as they believe in His Son.

- c. 9:27-28 Next we see from Isaiah 10:22-23 that God has decreed of Israel, though they are as numerous as the sand of the sea, yet only a remnant will be saved. From the context of the quote we can see that the immediate meaning was in reference to those who would be spared in the Assyrian conflict and captivity. However, Paul's use of this quote is to highlight that even in such calamitous events as this, where many Jews are given to destruction, God's promise to Abraham stands.
 - d. Of this work, the destruction and saving of the remnant... or of any work which God begins, He will finish it. As well as cut it short in righteousness. After the Jews rejected Christ, the Christian church began spreading rapidly around the world while the unbelieving Jews would see their ruin by the Romans in 70 Ad. And where the Old Testament took place over several thousand years, Christianity has circled the globe in half the time and we now wait for the full measure of the Gentiles to be brought in and for the gospel of the kingdom to be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations.
 - e. 9:29 Lastly he quotes another verse from Isaiah 1:9 to emphasize again a similar line of reasoning. That it is not unusual for God to allow the destruction of many and save a small handful. In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, only Lot and his family were spared. Though his wife also came to ruin. And thus it is more common than not that a remnant or seed be spared rather than the larger group. "Many are called, but few are chosen." And notice once again, if not for God leaving a seed, all would have been destroyed. It is not a wonder why many are left for destruction, but why any are saved at all, as it is only God's grace, mercy and promise that protect the seed.
53. 9:30-33 The chapter closes with a clearer picture as to why the Gentiles were brought in while the Jews were rejected. Though it will always come back to the grace of God, the Gentiles sought God by faith whereas the Jews sought God by their determined efforts as codified through the law. (Isa 65:1-7)
- a. 9:30 We know first hand that righteousness was not something we sought after until God put it in our hearts to do so. In accordance with our sinful nature, when given the freedom of choice, people will choose evil and the path that leads to hell, all the while convincing themselves otherwise. The Gentile world did not know God nor did they seek after Him. (Rom 1:18-28) Nonetheless, God has made Himself known and offered His righteousness through the substitutionary death of His Son to all who place their faith in Him.
 - i. The righteousness of God comes only by faith. The early church was bombarded with zealous Jews who desired to bring their law into the body of Christ and insisted that was the only way to be saved. Yet God has rejected their efforts for a reason. (Acts 15:1-2,5, 10-11) No one is able to keep the law, but "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." Salvation is a gift from God, not something that can be earned as the Jews believed.
 - b. 9:31 Israel attempted to fulfill the law, but has fallen so far short. In fairness, no one could have done better, yet they were blinded by their stubbornness. Their leaders were hypocrites and their laws were far removed from their original intentions. Jesus quoting the prophet Isaiah in Matthew 15 said: "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the

commandments of men.” (Mat 15:7-9) The law was never meant to confer righteousness, only to lead us to Christ. (Gal 3:24) But the Jews clung to their traditions and ceremonial laws not realizing they were only shadows pointing to the real thing. And still they did not fulfill them, yet even if they could have upheld those perfectly, they were missing the point entirely. For instead of glorifying God, they were relying on their own strength and will.

- c. 9:32-33 To conclude this matter of point, why were the Gentiles accepted before the Lord yet the Jews rejected? Because Israel did not seek the righteousness of God that comes through faith, but attempted to squeeze it out of the law by their works. They could not bring themselves to humility the way Christ taught, but were puffed up in their own minds forgetting that there was never anything inherently special about them over the rest of the world. (Deut 9:4-6) God had chosen them to be a holy nation and they rejected His holiness for their own ideas. They could not accept righteousness through faith in Christ and so they continue to carry the burden of the law stumbling on the rock of offense. Yet there was and is a remnant of Israel who believes, and all who do believe will not be put to shame.

54. Self Test Chapter 9

- a. Why did Paul have such great sorrow and continual grief in his heart?
- b. Which major doctrine(s) is/are presented in chapter 9?
- c. Did God break His promise to Abraham? How? Why?
- d. What does this statement mean? “For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel”
- e. Why was Esau hated, but Jacob loved?
- f. Is God unrighteous/unjust in choosing some over others?
- g. What purpose did Pharaoh serve in God’s plan?
- h. If God hardens the sinner's heart, why are we still held responsible?
- i. How does God’s wrath highlight the riches of His glory?
- j. Why did the Jews fail to obtain righteousness where the gentiles found it?

55. Review of Chapter 9: What about Israel? At the close of chapter 8 Paul introduces the idea of sovereign election and says in essence, for those who are saved nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. But if this is true, why have the Jews rejected Christ? Chapter 9 is dedicated to this question and the implications of God's sovereignty in the matter of salvation. Quite simply, God chooses who will be saved and who is passed over as summarized in verse 18 "Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He will HE hardens. But this will naturally raise some questions, especially in regards to Israel and Paul answers these ahead of time.

The first question is implied and found in verse 6. Does this mean God's promise to Abraham has become void and rewritten with the new covenant? No it does not. God's word will always accomplish it's purpose as intended. Israel will be saved, however not all Israel is Israel. Just being a physical descendant of Abraham is not enough to be included in the promise. We can see this clearly with the examples of Ishmael and Isaac. God never intended every physical descendant of Abraham to be saved, only those who are children of the promise, who believe in and trust in His word. Yet we know that such faith is a gift and cannot be earned. (Eph 2:8-9) As such God chooses who will receive the gift of salvation without any effort or merit from us. This is clearly seen with Esau and Jacob. Whereby having done nothing good or evil and while still in their mother's womb, God determined the older shall serve the younger so that the promise of God according to election might stand. "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

Does that mean there is unrighteousness with God? Does God arbitrarily choose who will go to heaven and who will go to hell? God is not and cannot be unrighteous for He is the standard of righteousness. God does not choose for us to go to hell. He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet 3:9) However, we reject Him over and over and therefore He gives us over to our own debased thoughts and unclean hearts. He hardens us or allows us to harden ourselves by removing His softening grace in our lives. But there are some whom He chooses to save. Why? Who can say, but God Himself. He will have mercy on whom He wills and compassion on whom He wills. The harsh reality that mankind does not wish to see is that we are all guilty sinners and therefore deserve the just condemnation we will inherit. God is not unrighteous for this, on the contrary He would be unrighteous if He allowed our sins and crimes to go unpunished.

When all is said and done, God does not owe us an explanation for anything and the bottom line is He may do as He pleases with His creation. Scripture says to Pharaoh "for this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you and that My name may be declared in all the earth." God allowed Pharaoh to harden his heart further and further in order that God's power would be displayed through the plagues, the miracles and the monumental escape from Egypt. And does God Almighty not have the right to do so? What if He allows evil to endure and suffers through it all patiently in order that His wrath and power may be fully displayed? And so that those who will be saved shall know the full blessing of salvation and what they have been spared from? We have no right to question our creator as we are but clay in the potter's hand. And blessed be God our Lord and Savior who spared us from pits of hell

and offered us mercy through His Son. To all who believe, the Gentile as well as the Jew as it has been foretold throughout Scripture. But how and why did the Gentiles receive this blessing when they did not even pursue it, yet the Jews who did pursue it through the law of righteousness have not attained it? Because the Jews did not seek it by faith, but by the works of the law. And “that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” (Gal 3:11)

56. Chapter 10 Intro: We know at the time of writing, Israel has rejected the gospel. Paul has made that clear and even expressed his grief and sorrow over this fact, but that does not mean it's too late for them. In this chapter Paul expresses the need to preach the gospel and continually pray for those who have yet to receive the truth. We will also see there is a vast difference between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith. The former was a hindrance to the Jews whereas the latter is how the Gentiles were accepted by God. And though the Jews stumble upon this stone of offense, there is no inherent difference between Jew and Gentile for all will be saved in the same manner; through belief and faith in the Lord.
57. 10:1-2 Paul opens up once again to express his inward desire regarding Israel. If only they could be saved and thus he prays for them. For he knows they are zealous towards God, but they lack a proper understanding of God to worship Him appropriately and be saved.
- a. His heart's desire for Israel- Is their salvation. Despite the fact they are actively persecuting him. He knows they are blinded and he wills that his brethren and countrymen according to the flesh would be saved. Paul was also a Jew, zealous in every regard towards the law of Moses. Doing the very same thing. (Gal 1:13-14) Therefore he knew firsthand and more than anyone, that it is only through the grace of God that he has been saved. And he knows that it is possible for them as well.
 - b. And prayer to God - We can observe that he didn't receive salvation to sit back relaxing and hoping for the best. His heart was burdened with grief and sorrow over their cause. He truly loved them and he brought this desire before the Lord. He presented them in prayer knowing that no one is too far gone for God to save. For “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,” (Rom 5:20) No matter what is going on in this world, we can always pray to God to have mercy on those who don't know they need it, as Jesus did while He hung from the cross. (Luke 23:34)
 - i. It is interesting to note that in the previous chapter we saw a thorough look into the sovereign election of God. So why do we need to pray for others at all? To start, God's word says that we should pray for all men. (1 Tim 2:1) Jesus also tells us to pray for our enemies. “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” Why would we do this? “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Mat 5:44-45) And so we must continually ask God for the love, compassion and zeal to pray for others.
 - ii. On top of this, we pray **because** God is sovereign and has the power to answer our prayers. James says “you do not have because you do not ask”. (James 4:2) He also says “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16) Scripture is clear that God hears our prayers and will answer them. And though the answer is no at times, prayer is an effective tool.

- iii. Another reason we pray is because it isn't only for God's ears, but for our hearts as well. When we pray, we are glorifying God, abiding in His Spirit and acknowledging His sovereign power over His creation. And the more we pray, the more our hearts are eased by this fact and the more peace we receive because of it as well. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phi 4:6-7)
- c. Paul's witness - Here we see why he is so burdened with grief and sorrow over them. They aren't rejecting God outright and defaming Him deliberately. They are passionate about God, zealous towards Him and even jealous over God's love. But their worship and service is just not according to the knowledge of Scripture. And therefore sympathy is aroused and understanding is being asked for on behalf of those who are ignorant.
 - i. Remember, Paul's address is to the "brethren" in Rome. He is writing to the saints who are also being persecuted and in a way asking them to have patience. He testifies on behalf of the Jews that they do want to serve God, they just don't know how. And unfortunately are doing it very wrong, even causing evil.
 - ii. We may also observe, and this is clearly seen in today's world, that It is possible to believe you are serving and worshiping God and yet be so distant from the truth that you reject it when you actually do hear it. Certain modern churches focus on emotional manipulation, attempting to ignite the zeal of youth, yet they do not spread the truth of the gospel. Or they ignore large parts of the gospel which leave their members ignorant of the knowledge required to save their soul. For we cannot be saved if we do not believe in Jesus. And we cannot believe in Jesus if we do not know who He is. It is impossible to have a right standing before God if we don't know what makes for that right standing in the first place.
- 58. 10:3-4 Zealous, but not according to knowledge and ignorant of God's righteousness. This is where the Jews found themselves. They didn't understand the seriousness of sin. They didn't understand the righteous requirements of heaven. And so they didn't submit themselves to God's narrow path, but attempted to forge their own way into heaven.
 - a. Seeking to establish their own righteousness - Paul now explains the basis of their ignorance. They were zealous regarding the law of God. They understood it was a great privilege not afforded to the rest of the world and even took pride in it. Therefore they scrupulously observed rules and ordinances created by men, no matter how illogical it might have been, believing this would advance them in favor before God.
 - i. We know they twisted the laws of God, and while this is a serious mistake which led them astray in many ways, this isn't the primary issue at hand. The real issue is that their pride and self righteousness had blinded them to the truth and purpose of the law in the first place. The law was never meant to grant or bestow righteousness, but to highlight and reveal the standard of righteousness God expects from us. The law was meant to bring us into knowledge of our sin and reveal how much we need and rely upon God, ultimately leading us to Christ. (Rom 3:20, Gal 3:24) Yet, because of their ignorance they believed they could earn their way into heaven not realizing they have no righteousness

and their “good deeds” are like filthy rags in the eyes of God. A mistake still repeated throughout the modern world.

- b. They have not submitted to the righteousness of God - “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat 5:3) We need to be like a beggar asking for mercy, but because they relied so heavily on their own efforts, they could not bring themselves to submit to the free grace of God offered through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. In their minds, they didn’t need Jesus and the cross became a stumbling block for them as it is with so many in the various religions.
 - i. What is it that prevents us from submitting ourselves? It is pride and arrogance requiring that we do things our own way. It is laziness requiring that we do not spend time and effort reading scripture and searching for the truth. And it is the darkness within us requiring that we do not forsake the evil deeds we so love. (Phi 3:7-9) Until we submit ourselves before God in all humility, realizing we have nothing within ourselves worthy of redemption, we will not be able to see or hear the truth. (Luke 18:9-14) The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector highlights this truth.
 - c. Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness - As mentioned earlier, the law was meant to lead people to Christ “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Gal 3:24) The moral law was to show us our transgressions and sinfulness against God, while the ceremonial law was to highlight the remedy in sacrifice and the washing away of our sin as a shadow of the perfect sacrifice which was to come. In both circumstances, Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness.
 - i. Christ is the perfection of the ceremonial law, the perfect sacrifice sufficient to cover the sins of all who believe in Him. The countless animal sacrifices could not take away sins any more permanent than the beginning of the next inevitable sin. And thus those sacrifices must be repeated day in and day out. But all of those animal sacrifices were just shadows of the real thing. When Christ came, there was no longer any need for the sacrificial system and so it came to an end, for His blood permanently covers our sin.
 - ii. Christ is the end of the moral law, for he accomplished what no one else could. To be clear, this does not mean the moral law has been removed, it is still the standard we are expected to uphold as Jesus said “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” (Mat 5:17) But justification is contingent upon perfect obedience to the law and yet it is impossible for any man to do this because of the encompassing nature of sin. Yet Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law and grants His perfect righteousness to all who believe. And so He is the end of the moral law for righteousness in regards to our personal need for justification in perfection.
59. 10:5-8 Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, but such a declaration is not readily accepted by the Jews. And thus he must prove these things to be true and does so by showing how the gospel is superior to the law quoting Moses along the way.
- a. 10:5 What is the righteousness of the law? - It is as Moses says: “The man who does those things shall live by them.” (Lev 18:5) In other words, if you fulfill the law you will live. In this regard Paul is separating the deeper hidden meanings of the law that point us to Christ and applying the law how the Jews maintained it to be. As such the only righteousness to be found in the law is through perfect obedience. And if it should be the case that a man will

uphold the law, he shall be blessed and live. That is, in heaven for all eternity. But “Cursed is the one who does not confirm *all* the words of this law by observing them.’ (Deut 27:26) Only one man has ever perfectly upheld that law and entered heaven on His own merits and that is of course Jesus Christ. Whereas every other man has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and as such will be bound to the curse of the law if he maintains to be held accountable by the law and reject the righteousness which comes by faith.

- b. 10:6-8 The righteousness of faith? - Again quoting Moses from Deut 30:11-14. He shows that the righteousness of faith is not something difficult to comprehend or grasp. It is not something unattainable or unrealistic. It is not in heaven that anyone must first go there to understand. Though Christ abides in heaven, we do not need to bring Him down from heaven in order to explain things to us or to be saved. Neither do we need to explore the depths of the abyss and bring Him up from the grave. Though He once was in the grave and has risen, we don’t need to fully understand every miraculous detail of the resurrection. It happened as a matter of fact, He is risen and He was dead. But, these things are not meant to confuse us, nor are they necessary for us to comprehend in order to know the ways and means of salvation. As Moses says in Deut 30:11 it is “not *too* mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off.” Rather it is simple and easy.
 - c. And what does the righteousness of faith say? “the word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.” There is nothing external for us to do and the righteousness required for salvation is already near to you. (Luke 17:21) Righteousness is a gift, received through faith in the word of God in accordance with the gospel, “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.” (Rom 1:16) Therefore It is in your mouth and in your heart so long as you desire it to be so. Study Scripture, meditate upon it and ask God for understanding. For faith is the means of salvation. Everything externally needful has already happened in Christ. And all we need to do is appropriate this blessing.
60. 10:9-13 The word of faith, which is salvation through the saving grace and merits of Christ, is only obtainable by those who openly profess Jesus to be their savior and truly believe within their hearts that He has been raised from the dead. Anything less is insufficient, but even so everyone may come freely to Christ no matter who they are, where they were born or what they have done. No one will be put to shame who places their faith in our Lord.
- a. 10:9 Paul mentions two basic conditions required for salvation. First is confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and second is belief in your heart that He has been raised from the dead. Though many will argue, especially the Jew, these are the requirements of salvation.
 - i. In regards to confession - First of all, what is actually being said here? What does it mean to confess Jesus as Lord? Well the term Lord is used to denote someone with authority or power. It can be used for a sovereign, a governor, a master or a ruler. But we know that Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings and therefore He is the supreme Lord over all. He declared that all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. (Rev 17:14, Mat 28:18) So if we are confessing that Jesus is Lord, we are in essence submitting to this authority. Saying “I am no longer in charge. I yield to His will and authority.” We are turning our back to the world as well as our own misguided thoughts and placing all of our trust in Him. We are giving ourselves in obedience by putting on His yoke and doing His bidding. And though we may fall into sin at times, the general

- demeanor of this statement is that Jesus is Lord over all, we acknowledge this and we will do as we are commanded to do or else why should we call Him Lord. "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)
- ii. This is not something that we work up towards. There are groups of people who claim you may accept Jesus as your savior and be saved, but that submitting to Him and accepting Him as Lord is not required and will come in due time... somewhere down the road. This idea is absurd as it denies who Christ is, it denies His deity and authority and makes everything He ever said optional. This is from the same camp who claims carnal Christians are true saints even if they have never turned from their sins. We know this is false because in order to be justified, we must be convicted of our sin and made to realize we need Christ for our salvation. The moment we are justified and born again is the moment the Holy Spirit comes to dwell inside of us and the moment we are removed from the kingdom of darkness.
 - iii. (Mat 10:32-33, Mark 8:38) Jesus did not mix words. If we deny Him before men, He will deny us before the Father. And if we are ashamed to associate with Him, He will be ashamed to associate with us. We must be willing to openly serve our savior and exclaim our blessed relationship with Him. This is one important reason to be baptized. There are many today who are embarrassed to mention Jesus for fear of ridicule and or being alienated, these are in danger of being denied access to heaven as Jesus was clear and left no room for fence sitting. To profess Jesus openly does come with some consequences as He told us it would and to count the costs of following Him. (Luke 14:26-33) But we must be willing to give up everything and endure all sorts of discomforts for the sake of our Lord.
 1. Freedom of religion is generally taken for granted within the United States, but at the time of writing, the early saints were literally putting their life on the line. Persecution came from many angles. To openly profess Jesus as Lord would put you in danger from the Romans as well as the Jews. Caesar was lord and this is what the Jews appealed to when they arrested Jesus and sought the death penalty from Pilate. (John 19:12) And to be a Christian Jew was risking access to your community, the temple and even your family. Today the same thing still happens in different forms around the world. And while it may seem unfair or barbaric, those who live in these settings have a difficult yet peculiar advantage in that when they openly profess Jesus, they have truly considered the ramifications and given all to Him.
 - iv. Apart from those who may deny Christ for fear of danger or embarrassment, there is a group of people who will readily confess Jesus for personal gain in one form or another. Perhaps they have Christian friends and don't want to be left out, or maybe they want to impress someone. Some people are led to believe that Christ promises health and wealth, promotions and dream fulfillment, but their profession is empty as they are not seeking Christ, but a personal genie. This is the other side of the carnal Christian teaching and a major problem with charismatic churches. They can say Jesus is Lord till they are blue in the face, but they don't mean it nor do they don't believe it. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven," (Mat 7:21)

- v. And finally there are also those who openly profess Jesus in all sincerity, having a zeal but without knowledge. Mormons and Jehovah's witnesses are two such groups. They name the name of Jesus, but they are not talking about the same Jesus. They have diverged from Scripture and altered the meaning of the original texts. Or so twist Scripture that it is no longer recognizable. To the point that they believe Jesus and the archangel Michael are one and the same being or that Jesus and Satan are brothers. This kind of error often comes from the lack of reverence for God's word. Whether that means adding to it, or subtracting from it, they see the Bible as something for their own wisdom to interpret while they pick and choose which texts are important. Which is one reason why sound doctrine and knowledge of Scripture is so important. However, it is important to note that all the knowledge in the world will not open the truth of God's word and who Christ truly is without the grace and mercy of God.
- b. The second condition required for salvation is that you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. If this does not exist, your words mean nothing. Both the confession and belief are necessary to be saved. One is outward, the other is inward, but both are needed and depend on the grace of God. "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:3)
 - i. It is important to understand how this faith works in us as we speak to others. Generally speaking, there are three components involved with true saving faith. Our minds, our emotions and our will. With our mind we must know the truth of the gospel. That we are sinners incapable of earning salvation and needing a savior in Christ who died for us, was buried and rose again the third day. Then with our emotions, we must be persuaded and convicted of this truth and our need for salvation. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. And finally there is an act of our own will wherein we deliberately choose to follow Jesus down the narrow path and leave the world behind.
 - ii. The specific needful fact mentioned is that we believe God has raised Him from the dead. Why is this? First because it implies that Jesus was a man. As It is impossible for God to die and therefore it was needful that He take on the flesh of man in order to be our sacrifice and redeem man. Second, because it indicates that His death was a substitutionary death. That He stood in our place and took our sins with Him to the grave. And finally, we need to believe this because it is true. He was literally raised from the dead. The ultimate proof that His sacrifice was accepted and He was declared to be the Son of God with power.
- c. The result of this confession and belief - You will be saved; Rescued and delivered from certain destruction. A promise speaking to the future when you will be spared from the fires of hell and divine punishment because your sins have already been paid for. Believers are justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God through His death. (Rom 5:9) It is important to note that this isn't a random punishment, but the full might and wrath of God being poured out on ungodly sinners. A fate we deserve but have mercifully been forgiven.
- d. 10:10 Reversing the order of what he just said, Paul clarifies the matter, further illustrating the truth that belief in the heart and confession of faith are inseparable. There cannot be a true confession without belief. For "those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart" (Mat 15:18)

- i. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness - In the matter of belief there is more to it than simply understanding factual details. Of course having an accurate understanding is important, however to believe, one must fully accept those factual details to be true, from deep within. Otherwise known as faith.
- ii. And this belief results in the righteousness of justification and sanctification. There is no righteousness within us apart from Christ, but just as it was with Abraham, who "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." So too will it be for all who believe in Christ with all their heart. They are justified and declared righteous by God as well as being actively sanctified and conformed to the image of His Son.
- iii. "and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" - Paul makes this out to be just as important as true belief in the heart and rightly so considering Jesus basically said the same thing in the gospels. (Mat 10:32, Mark 8:38, Luke 12:8) If there is no outward confession, there is no real understanding of eternal consequences. We cannot follow Jesus and the world, but must choose a side. If we will not stand for Jesus, He will not stand for us on the day of judgment.
 1. Notice that righteousness and salvation are used in parallel terms. Our salvation is contingent upon the righteousness we obtain through Christ.
 2. One additional note regarding this confession. It is not just the words we say, but the actions we take and the occasions we are called to speak for Christ. It is one thing to say you believe in Jesus behind closed doors, it is another to stand for Him publicly or in the midst of persecution. It is one thing to go to church, but it is another to disassociate with unbelieving friends and surround yourselves with fellow Christians. Lip service is nothing without the actions to accompany it.
- e. 10:11 He now quotes Isaiah 28:16 to prove his point. "For Scripture says". As though it is still speaking, "whoever believes will not be put to shame." No one who comes to Christ in all sincerity will be ashamed or disappointed they have come. No one who has been saved will regret their choice to come to Christ. And as we can see by the words of Jesus, (Mark 8:38) no one who is ashamed of Him should come in the first place. Everyone who has truly placed their faith in Him will be relieved and grateful to know their savior loves them.
- f. 10:12 Notice the repetition of the word "for" (v10,11,12,13). Every time he uses this word it is to explain what he previously said. "Whoever believes"; because there is no true distinction between Jew and Greek and he takes the opportunity to express this once more. There may be cultural differences, but their sinful nature and rebellious demeanor towards God are the same. And God is the same God over all. The same as He always was, yesterday, today and forever. He is not kind to one group of people and angry towards another because of their heritage or location. He is angry with sinners, but He is rich to all who call on Him.
- g. 10:13 Once again he circles back to explain, there is no true distinction among men, whoever shall call on the Lord will be saved. It is a blanket promise to all of mankind. This is the gospel. Believe and be saved. For everyone has sinned against God and there are none good. (Rom 3:10) All of mankind is in this same boat and we need His forgiveness. As we call on Him in humble repentance we acknowledge our need of mercy and His authority to pardon our sins through the blood of Christ. (John 3:16, 3:36, 11:25, Acts 2:31, Joel 2:32)

61. 10:14-21 It is true that whoever calls on the Lord will be saved, but this only highlights the dire necessity that the word of God be preached far and wide and often. If people are to call on the Lord, they must know who He is and what He wants from them. And for this we need preachers to declare the word and explain its meaning. Israel had the great privilege and advantage to receive this good news throughout their history, but they rejected it through disobedience as well as an outright rejection of Christ.
- a. 10:14-15 Here we see a series of rhetorical questions, working themselves backwards in order that are meant to raise awareness of the very specific need, which is gospel preaching. The answers clearly stand out as obvious and that is the point. If the gospel is not preached, people cannot be saved. And though it is technically possible to be saved by reading the gospel or hearing a song which proclaims the gospel, or perhaps through godly counseling, it is and has been the bold preaching of God's word that has been the primary tool used to convert multitudes of people throughout the years.
 - i. How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? - They won't be calling on anyone if they don't believe in them. The use of the term "call on Him" is meant to indicate saving faith as we can see in the previous two verses. We need to call on the Lord in order to be saved. But if we do not know the Lord, it is quite obvious we cannot call on Him. And in this context, belief is simply meant as the awareness or knowledge of who Christ is, i.e why He came to this earth and why we need Him. Belief precedes the calling and we must be persuaded of our need for Him in order to call upon Him at all. And so without this knowledge, awareness and belief there is no salvation.
 - ii. How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? - Once again, the obvious answer is they can't. We are not always aware of the things we don't know and so it would be impossible to believe the facts about the gospel without ever hearing them. Paul preached to the Greeks about THE UNKNOWN GOD. (Acts 17:22-34) He acknowledges they were "very religious" but they lacked any real understanding of who they were worshiping or what was expected of them. And it wasn't until Paul clearly explained the gospel that they could place their faith in Jesus as some did.
 1. Notice that it doesn't say whom they have read about. And that is because the gospel is meant to be proclaimed. For one, enthusiasm and passion are contagious and persuasion doesn't work as well through text. Additionally, as was noted earlier in verse 11, "Scripture says"... the living word, Jesus Christ speaks through Scripture and through the preacher as the gospel is shared. That is not to say all preachers are speaking with Christ if they are promoting themselves or some self help nonsense, but those who preach sound gospel have the Spirit of Christ preaching with them.
 - iii. How shall they believe without a preacher? - In all the possible ways that God could have declared the gospel, He has chosen the weak and fallible voice of man to spread His word. How shall they believe without a preacher? They can't. Preachers are teachers and without them it would be very difficult to understand what Scripture means. They proclaim the word and explain its meaning. The apostles were trained by Jesus to preach. Throughout history, men have been trained to rightly divide the word of truth. Seminaries exist for this purpose. In Acts 8:30-37 as Philip approached the Ethiopian eunuch and heard him reading from Isaiah, he said "Do you understand what you are

reading?” and the Ethiopian said “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And that is exactly what Philip did. He explained that particular Scripture and preached Jesus so that the eunuch was able to understand. To the point that he asked to be baptized and declared “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

- iv. How shall they preach unless they are sent? - First of all, we are speaking about true preachers of God’s word. How can anyone truly declare God’s word unless they are sent to do so? They can’t. And so we are talking about the anointing, or the commission to speak in His name. In the old testament false prophets were under threat of death if they chose to speak in the name of God. In modern times we are plagued by self interested preachers. But only those who have truly been called and sent by God to preach will be effective in saving souls. Churches now inquire amongst the elders who is fit to preach. But Christ is the head of the church and He is the one who ultimately decides who will be sent. (Acts 13:1-4)
- v. As it is written: How beautiful the feet... - In normal circumstances this might be a strange choice of words, but the imagery is that the feet are the instruments which carry the mouth and glad tidings from place to place. How welcome are the feet that bring this message. Mary Magdalene kissed Jesus’ feet, Jesus washed His disciples feet. When there is a terrible message to deliver we might say “don’t kill the messenger”, but when the message is one of joy, we are filled with gladness to see that messenger.
 1. This quote is taken from Isaiah 52:7 which speaks of Israel’s deliverance from Babylon, but also looks ahead to the gospel. A joyous and wonderful occasion as the gospel is the gospel of peace. Through the hearing of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit we may be saved and reconciled to God, truly bringing us peace. Yet it is not just the peace with God that is cause for celebration, but all the wonderful glad tidings. Our justification and sanctification, our rescue from the kingdom of darkness, our new heart that desires God’s word and our eternity in heaven with Jesus. There is much to be thankful for, and we are blessed to have those willing to spread the word of God.
- vi. 10:16 Unfortunately the gospel is not accepted and seen as good news by all, a tragedy of the deepest kind. For “they have not all obeyed the gospel”. As was foretold by the prophet Isaiah 53:1 “who has believed our report.” We cannot force the light of truth onto others. In fact, it is not received as good news by many or even most people. The Jews of the time certainly did not receive it readily. But that does not diminish the message by any means. “let God be true but every man a liar.” It doesn’t matter if every single person rejected the message outside of the apostles. God’s word is truth and is also a command. To reject the gospel is to disobey God. To believe and repent is nothing more than we ought to do and are commanded to do. Jesus told His disciples in the great commission “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mat 28:19:20) Romans 1:5 “Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.” Obedience is a requirement. It is ultimately how we grow, how we mature and how we will be conformed to the image of Christ.

- vii. 10:17 Summarizing the matter, and reiterating what he started with in v14, he says faith comes by hearing. Indicating yet again that preaching is the ordinary means by which we are saved. And hearing by the word of God. That is to say, hearing which leads to faith only comes through the word of God. Not by the arguments and persuasions of men, though we must persuade, but by the living and powerful word of God. (Heb 4:12)
- viii. 10:18-21 But if it is true that faith comes by hearing the word of God, why then did Israel not have the required faith? Did they not hear? Did they not know? They most certainly heard and knew, for the gospel was preached far and wide, and their prophets foretold of Israel's rejection leading to the Gentile world being included in the promise. Therefore there is no excuse that shall be accepted on judgment day. Those who have rejected the gospel, have only themselves to blame.
1. There is an unfortunate flaw produced by our sin nature in that we attempt to escape responsibility and make excuses for our mistakes. From the very beginning, Adam attempted to blame Eve for eating the apple and even to blame God for giving him the woman. This is just a part of who we are and we must learn to confess our sins for there is no valid excuse and we will be held accountable. The next two verses foresee the potential excuses and reject them.
 2. But I say, have they not heard? - Speaking of Israel, (though it can be applied universally), he is preemptively answering questions that would naturally arise as he so often does. What about Israel? If they lack faith it must be because they haven't heard, right? Of course not. All throughout the Old Testament and all of their prophets speak the truth of God's word pointing to the coming messiah. Not only that, but many of them witnessed Christ's miracles firsthand and still rejected Him. Word had undoubtedly gotten around. And at the time of Paul writing this letter (around 57 A.D.), the gospel of Christ has been preached for almost 30 years. So they have most certainly heard and have no one to blame, but themselves.
 3. This is a common question that is often raised. "What about those who have never heard the gospel? Will they be punished for not knowing what they have never heard?" The short answer is: No, they will be punished for their sins. But we can see the reason behind this from the Scripture Paul quotes in Psalm 19:1-4. "The heavens declare the glory of God" and "Their sound has gone out to all the earth". There is simply no excuse for they have most likely either heard the gospel or heard of it. Especially in today's world 2000 years later.
 4. But I say, did Israel not know? - That is, did they not know the Gentiles would be brought into the fold? How could they not know? It was foretold by the prophets and here he quotes Moses in Deut 32:21 to prove his point. (Deut 31:16-22, 32:5-6, 15-22). God specifically gave them the song of Moses as a reminder and a witness against them that He knew exactly what they are about and how they would reject Him and provoke Him to jealousy, but in return He would provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation and to anger by a foolish nation. To this end it most certainly came true and the Jews would play the role of the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son. They were jealous and angry that the Gentiles should receive any sign of favor from God. (Acts 13:44-50, 17:5, 13, 22:22)

5. But Isaiah is very bold - Next he quotes Isaiah [65:1-2](#). Paul applies verse 1 directly to the gentiles, "a nation *that* was not called by My name." Between Isaiah and Moses the Jews should have been on alert and overly cautious how they walked before their God. But they took for granted the mercy and grace they received and so it was offered to the idolatrous gentile nations who did not even seek after Him. In this Isaiah was very bold to speak against his countrymen, but such is the need for those who will stand with God.
6. I was found by those who did not seek Me - In most normal circumstances, we must seek after God. Whether for salvation, to follow after the truth which leads us to His righteousness (Mat 6:33), or in repentance after we have turned from God and must seek His forgiveness. (Deut 4:29, Jer 29:13). But in accordance with His grace and sovereignty, it is His prerogative to dispense mercy and favor on anyone He so chooses. And in this case, it has been granted to the Gentile world to hear the good news of the gospel where they certainly had not been looking for Him. As much could be said about us all. Though we must seek God when we hear the light of truth, it is only thanks to His love that we hear this truth at all.
7. But to Israel he says - All day long, referring to continuous and ample opportunities that God has given them. His arms are always open. Though they turn from Him time and time again, He is like a loving Father waiting for His children to come to senses. This first half of the verse makes reference to God's goodness towards Israel. While the second half speaks to the wickedness of Israel towards God.
8. The gifts of God are unparalleled and no one has been more graciously favored than Israel. From Abraham to Moses and David, the law and the prophets, the nation of Israel has been exceedingly blessed. To know God, to receive His law, to understand His greatness, both in the capacity of His power and in the glory of His wisdom. Even when they turn against Him, His patience remains and He continually acknowledges His covenant with Abraham will continue and that a remnant will always remain so that His word would stay true. His hands have always been stretched towards them waiting for the day they repent of their sins. (2 Chr 7:13-14) And of course the greatest gift of all being life and salvation through Jesus Christ who was born a Jew.
9. How did Israel respond to all of this? With complacency, conceit and contempt. Disobedience and disrespect from those chosen to receive His grace. Every step of the way they turned their back to God. From the creation of the golden calf shortly after being freed from Egypt, to disobeying the command to destroy the inhabitants of the promised land to demanding a king so they could be like every other heathen nation and sacrificing to false gods. God's patience with mankind is a wonder not to be taken for granted. The Israelites have refused His grace for their own lustful hearts and foolish wisdom, trading the commandments of God for their own traditions. (Mat 15:3) Their awaited Messiah has come and they reject Him because they believed things would be different. They refuse to humble themselves and the more they refuse, the more stubborn they become. And even worse than all of this, is that they not only rejected the salvation Christ offered, but had Him murdered all the while blaspheming against the righteous and holy Son of God.

62. Self Test Chapter 10

- a. What is/are Paul's desire(s) concerning Israel? Was he doing anything about it?
- b. If Israel had such zeal for God, what was the problem?
- c. Describe one way in which Christ is the end of the law for righteousness?
- d. Name one difference between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith?
- e. What two actions does Paul say are necessary to be saved?
- f. 10:13 says: For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Is Paul contradicting himself?
- g. What is being stressed in verse 14&15 and why are feet mentioned as beautiful?
- h. With verse 14&15 in mind, Is it possible, the reason for the Jews rejection of Christ is because they haven't heard the gospel?
- i. What was the reason God gave to Moses for the Song of Moses?
- j. Describe one observation about God from verse 21?

63. Review of chapter 10: Continuing the discourse on the nation of Israel, Paul breaks down one of their primary issues. They lack knowledge of God's righteousness which has led them astray towards self righteousness and a distorted view of the law. For without the knowledge that Christ is the end of the law, it would be a natural conclusion that we must continue in the law. Such is why the preaching of the gospel is so important as it frees people from their impossible burdens, because of the work that Christ has already done.

The righteousness which comes from the law is a dead end for mankind as those who are under the law must obey or else be cursed by the same law. However, the righteousness which comes through faith is easily obtainable and is already present in your mouth and in your heart if you confess the Lord Jesus and believe He has risen from the dead. The Israelites knew this, yet rejected God's word and His prophets. Though the prophets foretold of this very thing, even foretold of Israel's obstinance and the Gentiles being brought into the loving embrace of God, still Israel rejected the good news of the gospel and remain in a fallen state until that time when they will humble themselves and embrace their savior.

64. Chapter 11 intro: The main theme of chapter 11 is straightforward though perhaps not as easily understandable. The discourse surrounding Israel continues. What about God's people? If they have rejected Christ, and God has turned to the Gentiles, does that mean their rejection is final? Have the Gentiles replaced Israel as God's chosen people? Paul sets out to answer this and further reconcile the seeming contradictions that might be raised. In this he shows that God's judgment against the Jews is not all encompassing as there is a remnant that remains. And furthermore even though the Jews have been set aside to make room for the Gentiles, this is not their final state as they will be received back into the church in the future.
65. 11:1-6 Right off the bat, we see the lingering question answered. Has Israel been discarded? Absolutely not. Paul uses himself as the leading example and turns once again to Scripture in order to prove this is not the case. Israel remains in the favor of God despite their rejection of Christ. However, as he said back in chapter 9:6 "they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel". But in accordance with God's divine election, a remnant will be preserved and this only by His grace.
- a. 11:1 The primary thought that must be addressed regarding Israel is the promises made from God to the forefathers. He has already done this extensively in chapter 9, but the need for further clarification comes from the fact that the Gentiles have now received this favored grace as well.
 - i. First, to answer the question. Has Israel been cast off? Have they been totally rejected in favor of the Gentiles? Absolutely not. God's word stands as a pillar of truth in a world of lies. When He says something will happen, it does and nothing anyone can say or do will affect this. Notice the response Paul uses here. It is the same strong negative response that he has used elsewhere in this letter. (3:4,6,31, 6:2, 7:7,13) It is a strong emphatic NO! As if the idea is absurd. Yes, many Jews were cast off, but not all of them as he has already addressed in preceding chapters.
 - ii. To prove his point he asserts himself as evidence number one. "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." If God were to utterly cast off all Israel,

Paul himself would be left without any hope and cut off as it were with the rest of them. But we know this is not the case because Christ personally called Paul to serve Him as Ananias would testify, to be a “chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15) Not to mention the other apostles.

- b. 11:2-4 To further prove his point, he continues with evidence from Scripture. The prophet Elijah once pleaded with God against Israel for their evil deeds. Idolatry, murder and apostasy to name a few. But God’s response to him is that not all have done so and I have preserved the men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.
- i. In bringing this up, the general idea is that for God to preserve a remnant is nothing new. It obviously happened during the time of Elijah. (1 Kings 19:14) And yet whereas Elijah thought and said “I alone am left” there were actually 7000 others who would have stood with him. Which proves the remnant is much larger than one would have thought.
 1. A couple things to take away from this particular detail. First, we should not lose hope when things seem too far gone. Elijah thought he was the only one left in Israel to remain faithful, but that was not the case. America might look like it is turning into a cesspool of idolatry, violence, and perverted ideology, but that is only what the news media chooses to show us. We know there are faithful stewards of God’s word all around the world. Even if the number is relatively small.
 2. We can also notice that even the wisest amongst us may be drawn into lost hope. But once again we must rely on God and His word. Pro 28:12 “When the righteous rejoice, *there is* great glory; But when the wicked arise, men hide themselves.” So it was during the time of Elijah and Ahab. Jezebel had sought and killed the prophets of the Lord. The altars of God were torn down while altars to Baal were erected. There may very well be a time coming where we see this exact thing.
 - ii. God has not cast away those whom He foreknew - He is reiterating the truth of predestination we saw back in chapter 8:28-30. There are some in Israel who would be preserved just as in the time of Elijah. For it is God who is doing the preserving. “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel” (1 Kings 19:18) Those whom God foreknew are called and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. He will not allow them to fall into perdition.
 - iii. Or do you not know what Scripture says? - Once again, this question is asked which highlights the importance of knowing Scripture. We cannot confirm or deny what someone is saying if we don’t know the Scripture. Thankfully we have the opportunity in this day and age to have copies of the Bible everywhere, or even on our phones, but clearly that wasn’t always the case and for those who do not have easy access, a working knowledge of the text is critical.
 - iv. Elijah pleads with God against Israel - Elijah did not plea with God to destroy Israel or even for some negative infliction, but was bearing testimony against them when things seemed hopeless. This was after he had performed the miracle of the burning sacrifice against the prophets of Baal and Jezebel had threatened to kill him. He was on the run more or less when God asked him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” So Elijah responded in testimony against Israel while believing he was left alone.

1. They have forsaken your covenant, killed your prophets, tore down the altars. Israel had turned their back to the Lord and any remaining vestige of God was replaced with altars or images of Baal. The whole of society had been so fully engulfed in Baal ideology that it was risky for Elijah to remain with his countrymen. But one thing we can take from this, is that when everyone is doing something we should be questioning the wisdom of going along to get along. God is not interested in men pleasers or even our personal comfort in speaking the truth. He is looking for those who will stand for Him boldly and not be ashamed. This is not to say however, that we should be unwise and provoking. But instead be filled with and led by the Spirit
2. But what does the Divine response say? - Though Elijah believes all is lost and he is the only one left to remain true to God, (likely in a moment of fear) God informs him that is not the case for He has reserved 7000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Once again, notice it is God who has reserved these men. As it is God who reserves all who are saved. (Eph 2:8)
 - a. Both Elijah and God are only speaking of those who are truly loyal to the Lord. After Elijah had performed the miracle of fire on the wet altar, the children of Israel seized the prophets of Baal for them to be executed. Seeming to indicate they are now on the side of God. However, this is not a game where we may go back and forth to the winning side. That is a far cry from sincere faith. If we deny Christ at work or school for fear of alienation or ridicule, but openly profess Him at church, we are double minded and clearly ashamed of Him. (Luke 9:26)
 - b. The temporal zeal of the Israelites was exclusively because they had witnessed the miracle and Elijah knew this, which is why he said "I alone am left." He knew they wouldn't stand up for him against Ahab and Jezebel. Similar to the first time Jesus cleansed the temple (John 2:24) and people believed because of the signs they saw, but Jesus did not commit Himself to them". These are people swayed by emotions or displays of power and authority. We need to be careful to discern the difference before we commit ourselves to them in trust.
- c. 11:5-6 Paul now applies this historic event to (then) present day Israel. Just as it was during the time of Elijah, even so it was at the time of writing. A remnant remains who are loyal and faithful thanks to the beloved grace and election of God Almighty. It has nothing to do with the works they have done, but only and exclusively according to the sovereign grace of God.
 - i. (V5) Even so at this present time - in the context of this Scripture, Paul is referring to the Israelites in question. The Gentile have been brought into the grace of God, but what about Israel? Have they been cast off? No not all, there is a remnant being preserved, just as there has always been a remnant reserved and preserved by God. Even in the Old Testament when the doctrines of grace were less clear He preserved Adam and Eve, Noah, Job, Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob etc. All throughout history God has preserved a line of people who would be called to serve Him according to His sovereign election. Those Israelites who put their faith and trust in Jesus as Lord were part of this remnant. For at that time it was a difficult thing to openly profess your faith in Christ, so we know God was working in their hearts.

1. Today, at this present time all of this still applies in the modern world. Though it would seem to be, in a way, reversed. God's grace has been made so abundantly clear that millions openly profess Jesus as their savior without ever truly knowing Him. There are a variety of reasons, but the reality is that there is a serious lack of knowledge and an unwillingness to hear sound doctrine. (2 Tim 4:3) The preference seems to be emotional excitement, entertainment. Yet even so, there is a remnant of faithful servants to the Lord who desire His truth and share it openly.
- ii. A remnant remains according to the election of grace - Paul has already addressed the doctrine of election back in chapter 9. He addresses it again now to say that Israel is part of this election, though it is in remnant form.
 1. A remnant is a small portion of a greater whole. Though most, whether it be 80-90 or even 99% turn from God, He will reserve a remnant to remain loyal. How many people He reserves is determined by His own purpose at the time. Suffice it to say there need not be a large number for the purpose of God to be fulfilled.
 2. Notice where and how election is mentioned, directly after quoting God who says "I have reserved 7000 men." And that is because our salvation is exclusively the work of God. From before the foundation of the world, He foreknew those whom He would reserve; those upon whom He will bestow life, grace and mercy as vessels of honor. He is not waiting to see what we do, or in the case of Israel, He wasn't waiting to see who would or wouldn't bow the knee to Baal. He knew exactly who would or who wouldn't because through His grace, He gave them the strength and faith to withstand the pressure of the world's influences. This remnant, or any remnant for that matter would not exist outside of His grace.
- iii. (V6) And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works - Paul likes to circle back on points he has already made. Earlier in this letter he used the example of Abraham to illustrate the concept of grace. "to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Rom 4:4-5) He also highlights unmerited grace through the example of Ishmael and Isaac as well as Jacob and Esau.
 1. The idea is straightforward; The nature of grace excludes work. The two ideas are counterposed to each other. Where one begins, the other ends. Eph 2:8 says we have been saved by grace through faith. It is explicit to make clear that work has nothing to do with it or else we would have reason to boast. But all of our boasting belongs to God. Grace is a free and unmerited gift that God chooses to give us for no reason other than His own goodwill and pleasure. (Eph 1:4-6) And without His grace we cannot obtain salvation as our sin nature excludes us from pleasing God. (Rom 8:8)
 2. For If it is work, it is no longer grace as "a worker is worthy of his food." (Mat 10:10) Work is some form of physical or mental activity done with a purpose of achieving specific results. If we work, we are deserving of our pay and therefore It cannot be grace since we have earned it. But it is only due to His grace and the work of Christ that we are able to serve Him at all. Before we are saved we are imprisoned by our flesh and it is impossible to please the Lord. Our "righteous deeds" are like filthy garments in His eyes. (Isa 64:6)

- d. 11:7-10 Paul brings this matter to a succinct summary, going back to the end of chapter 9. So then what can be said of Israel? By and large they have not obtained what they seek. Only the elect have obtained the sought after favor of God while the rest were blinded to the truth of the gospel exactly as it was foretold in Scripture.
- i. (V7) Israel has not obtained what it seeks - First of all, Israel here is spoken of as a whole, as a national entity or the larger population of Jews. Generally speaking they have not obtained what they sought after. Most of the population had been set aside as it is with the world at large. Many are called but few are chosen.
1. What was Israel seeking? And why did they not obtain it? They were seeking the favor of God, justification, the promises of the blessings. (Deut 28:1-14) But, they could not find what they were looking for because they were seeking for the wrong thing and in the wrong place. (9:30-32, 10:2-3) Lacking knowledge of God's grace, they attempted to earn their way into heaven and refused to submit to His ordained plan for salvation. They sought after the righteousness of the law, but didn't realize that form of righteousness only comes to those who perfectly obey, otherwise there is the promise of cursing. Thus they stumbled at the cross, rejecting their only hope.
 2. But the elect have obtained it - Once again he is speaking of Israel. We could extend this to all the elect, but the address is specific to Israel. There is the body of Jews known as Israel collectively and there is the elect remnant he refers to in 11:5 "at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace". And 9:6 "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel". Only those who God foreknew before the foundation of the world will be saved. (8:28-30) If you are foreknown by God, you are predestined to be justified. He will reserve you for Himself and call you in due time as He did with the 7000 men who did not bow the knee to Baal. On the other hand, if you are not part of the elect, you cannot be justified no matter what you do because you will have no idea what it is or how to obtain it.
 3. Just a quick note about election because it always draws discussion, if it were not for God's sovereign election, no one would be saved at all. God independently chooses to save some people out of the world for no discernable reason other than His good pleasure that He may be praised and glorified. Those who are not part of the elect do not want to be part of the elect. Even apostate Israel who seemingly did want to be elect could not bring themselves to submit to His will and that is the catch. Our self righteous attitudes and prideful hearts prevent us from ever turning to Him in sincerity. And If it were left to us we would all be damned. That is the central message of the doctrine of grace. That we may be justified apart from the works of the law and only because of His love for us. There is nothing inherently wrong about this; there is no obligation on His part to save every person He created. "Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" (9:21) The difficulty we often face in trying to accept this is seeing the people we love reject the free offer of salvation. But that is the way God chose for it to be and no saint has left this earth without knowing and feeling the weight of that burden. (Rom 9:1-3)

4. The rest were blinded - again this is in reference to those Jews who are not part of the elect. Those who were not chosen for salvation. The larger body of Jews were blind to the truth preached by Christ and His apostles. Why? Because "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2:14) We are dead in our trespasses, unable to receive the gospel without God's grace and mercy. The Jews in mention either could not or would not see what the Scripture has said about their messiah and their unbelief becomes permanent at some point.
 5. It should be noted that God did not create some to be saints and others to be evil. In no way is He responsible for the evil within our soul. That evil is the result of Adam's sin as well our own and the evil already present within us. We are all heading to hell with or without our hearts being blinded by God. And there is no situation where someone is trying to come to Christ, but God declines them and blinds them to the truth. Those who are hardened have already rejected the truth of God. They reject Him. Though it could be said that we all would reject God if not for His intervention and this is true. (9:14-18) "He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." But the fact is that only those who have already rejected God will be hardened or blinded.
- ii. (V8-10) Just as it is written - Paul now calls forth evidence from Scripture as if to say this is how it's always been. There has always been an aspect of God choosing to harden some and give grace to others. Pharaoh was hardened and raised up with a purpose to show God's power. So Paul is now using different portions of the old testament to prove this point. Taking from the law, the prophets and the writings. From the law deut 29:4, prophets Isaiah 29:10 writings psalm 69:22-23
1. Notice the wording of the text. It makes a clear point to say that God has given them a spirit of stupor. It wasn't something that just happened because of their stubbornness, but it was a deliberate action taken by God. There is a self hardening that happens as a result of rejecting the gospel, and the more we reject it the more our hearts are hardened. But there may come a time when there are no more chances. Jesus said "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." (John 12:36) God isn't in the business of rejecting those who seek Him, but He will make a final decision to prevent some from turning to Him and blind them to the truth of the gospel. (Mat 11:25)
 2. God has given them a spirit of stupor - Verse 8 is a blend of two Scripture passages and this first portion is taken from Isaiah 29:10 followed by Deut 29:4. From the text in Isaiah we can see exactly what the spirit of stupor is. It is like a dream where you obtain nothing that you truly seek. It is like having the book of life, but not being able to read it. Their prophets won't be able to receive the direction of God, nor share the wisdom of His word, nor will there be any understanding amongst the people. And in this matter God has chosen to do this, making them unable to respond. And notice how Paul quotes Deut 29:4 down "to this very day". It is a deliberate action to highlight the current state of Israel in New testament times. (Isa 6:9-13)

3. This was/is a punishment for the nation Israel for their disobedience and rejection of Jesus Christ. It does not apply to all Israel as there is clearly a remnant being described, but for the vast majority this judgment is a binding decree from God the Father. (Mat 13:11-17) From this text in Matthew we see Jesus confirms that “even what he has will be taken away from him.” This is speaking of the Jews and to the fact that those who do not have the insight of truth to the gospel will have even their basic understanding taken away. And to put this in a bit of perspective, it was the previous chapter, Mat 12:31-32 that Jesus spoke of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In which national Israel committed the unpardonable sin in rejecting Christ. (See also John 12:37-41, quoting Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10)
4. And David says - Paul continues to prove his point by quoting David in Psalm 69:22-23, which is considered an imprecatory psalm. These verses highlight the nature of the curse that came upon the Jews as a people. Here we read David calling upon God to act swiftly towards His enemies. In such a way that what should be a blessing, instead becomes a snare and a trap.
 - a. Let their table become a snare before them, And their well-being a trap. The point and idea is that they would be fooled into thinking they are safe and sound as the table is an image of comfort and plenty. A place for fellowship and satisfaction.
 - b. A stumbling block and a recompense to them - that is, Jesus Christ and the gospel they have rejected based upon their slack understanding of God’s word. (Rom 9:33 “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense”), They took comfort in their man made laws and foolish ideas while turning their back to the wedding feast they were invited to attend. (Mat 22:2) But there would be a recompense, or retribution for their sinful ways and snide attitudes. And God is giving to them exactly what they deserve for all of it.
 - c. Let their eyes be darkened - The people of Israel were blinded because God chose for them to be so as punishment for their sin. They didn’t want to see what God had laid out for them. They didn’t want to do what God had asked of them. To repent and believe in His Son. Instead they killed Him and gave Him vinegar to drink on the cross. They were set in their ways and content to reject and condemn Jesus without searching Scripture. (John 7:52) Therefore their eyes were darkened to the truth and it was no longer possible to see.
 - d. Bend their back always - the picture here is one of oppressive slavery under a heavy load. Apostate Israel trying to work their way to God under the impossible yoke of the law and achieving righteousness by their own means. Attempting to keep the commandments and walk themselves to heaven. This could also be applied in a spiritual manner in that their backs are bowed down to the world in constant state of carnal
 - e. Once again, as a matter of practical application. The more you reject God the more likely you are to permanently be barred from the kingdom of heaven. If you do not want to see the light, God will blind you. If you do not want to hear the gospel, God will cause you to go deaf. He will give you over to your own foolish desires. We all sat under this judgment and wrath and It is only thanks to His

patience and long-suffering that we have not been totally rejected. Therefore let us understand the plight of national Israel and the thousands of years they have had to suffer the consequences of past actions. And let us consider these things with compassion as we look to the world who constantly rejects His truth.

- e. 11:11-16 Here we see that there is more to the Jews rejection than just a punishment for their sin. As with the parable of the wedding feast (Mat 22), the Jews refusal to beckon the call opened the door and left empty seats for the gentiles to be received.
 - i. (V11) have they stumbled that they should fall? - Once again, Paul is leading us through the logical implications by means of question and answer. The question serves the purpose of addressing God's righteousness and wisdom. They (being the Jews) have stumbled on the stone and rock of offense. (9:33) But does this mean they should fall permanently? Was there no other purpose in the fall of the Jewish people other than to see them destroyed and come to naught? Was God simply acting out the final punishment against those who rejected Him? Those people whom He gave so much?
 - 1. Certainly not! But through their fall,... salvation *has come* to the Gentiles - With God no action is independent from any other. Everything serves His greater purpose. And the greater rejection of the Jews serves multiple purposes.
 - a. First it opened the door of the kingdom to the Gentiles. It wasn't a necessity that the Jews reject the gospel in order for the Gentiles to receive it, but it was God's plan for it to play out this way. (Acts 13:44-48) Why? Only God knows for certain, but we can see from the reaction of the Gentiles in Acts 13, that the word of God was glorified. The wedding feast was prepared and someone will enjoy it even if those who were first invited refused to come.
 - b. A second purpose that branches off the Gentile acceptance is the jealousy that this would produce in the Jewish people. They were prideful of their heritage and already jealous for the love of God. They considered themselves to be above the filthiness of the world, but in reality they were as filthy as the rest. And their rejection along with the Gentile reception was meant to be received as a wake up call and provoke them to jealousy by seeing others enjoy the gifts they were always meant to enjoy. And the wisdom of God is displayed in this circular system. As a result of Israel's sin and rejection, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles. That is the gospel and the message of the cross. And now as it spreads around the world, it will in turn provoke them to jealousy and bring them back in humble repentance before the Lord. (10:19)
 - ii. (V12) It is easy to see how the fall of the Jews was beneficial to the world. Their failure was the sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel. And while it was a devastating loss for them, it has been as a matter of fact, a spiritual blessing to the rest of the world, referring to the Gentiles as a conglomerate of people. And we can see by Paul's words in acts 18:6 "Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." that it was because they so vehemently rejected the gospel that he turned to the Gentiles in the first place. But if it was their rejection that brought such spiritual wealth and riches to the world, and this primarily to provoke them to jealousy, how much more glorious will the day be when they are finally brought back in good standing.

1. What are some of these riches? First and foremost the message of peace and reconciliation with God. The forgiveness and good standing that comes through faith in His Son. The gospel in and of itself is a spiritual treasure that has blessed the world abundantly. Though it has taken time, the gospel has softened the hearts of the world even where people claim not to believe.
- iii. (V13-14) He now addresses the Gentiles directly, reminding them how and why this word is for them. For in doing so he fulfills his ministry as an apostle to the gentiles and hopes to possibly provoke some of his fellow Jews to jealousy.
1. What can we take from this? First Paul, as a Jew is reaching out to the Gentiles. A picture of the very thing he is speaking about. That God will use Israel to reach the world in one way or another. Israel is supposed to be a witness to the world, a holy people and special treasure above all people on the earth. Not because of anything they did, but because God chose to love them and desires to keep His promises to the patriarchs. (Deut 7:6-8) But instead of seeing this blessing for what it is, Israel has neglected this privilege in various ways causing the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of God. (Rom 2:24) So now God will use them another way in their unbelief. The gospel which was theirs to preach has now been given to the Gentile world. Who now receives the privilege of witnessing to the world. And in the end times, Israel will see this and be provoked to jealousy. Although in mentioning how he might bring some to jealousy, he means in his lifetime.
- iv. (V15) He is somewhat restating and clarifying what was spoken in verse 12. That if Israel's rejection is a blessing to the world, what will their reinstatement mean? When they finally receive and accept the gospel as the living water it is, they will be given life and welcomed back as the prodigal son. "your brother was dead and is alive again," (Luke 15:32) Therefore in regard to the Gentiles, they should not boast over the Jews, but have pity and pray for them while they are lost, and rejoice with them when they turn to Jesus.
- v. (V16) As explanation and exhortation as to why they should view the Jews in this manner Paul gives us two illustrations. Both are saying the same thing, that there is reason to believe in hope that the Jews will turn back to God as he has been saying... God is not done with Israel.
1. For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; - This image comes from the custom found in Num 15:19-21, where the people would dedicate the first piece of dough or the first cake of ground meal to the Lord. It was to be a heave or wave offering consecrated and offered as thanks. Similar can be found in Lev 23:10 with the firstfruits of harvest. The point is that if the first is holy and separated and dedicated to God, the rest would follow and also be holy. We can see this with the roots and the branches as well. If the roots are healthy and well, or in this case holy, the branches follow suit as they grow and take nourishment from the holy roots. In this metaphor he is speaking about the patriarch Abraham as the roots and Israel as the branches. And as we can see from the next few verses Israel being cut off as natural branches, left room for the Gentiles as wild branches to be grafted in.

- f. 11:17-22 Continuing in his word to the Gentiles, Paul cautions them to be mindful of their place in the order of redemption. The word of salvation came first to the Jews. The patriarchs, the law, the prophets, the Messiah Himself, all of these are inherently Jewish. And the Gentiles are now walking on the ground Israel has paved. Thus there should be a large measure of humility and gratitude towards the Jewish people. As well as the constant awareness of how the gospel came to be preached to the Gentiles in the first place.
- i. (V17-18) First we see an admonition or warning that continues on from verse 16. Taking the imagery of the root and branches. The root is found in Abraham and the promises of salvation God gave to him as well as the covenant found in Gen 12,15 and 17. And the branches are ethnic Israel, those who were literally born from Abraham's seed. He says if the natural branches were cut off and wild branches were grafted in, there is no room for boasting against those branches which were cut off. The Gentiles have absolutely no place to boast because it is the roots of Israel that support their salvation and not the other way around.
1. If some of the branches were broken off - He is beginning a line of reasoning and says (since) some of the branches were broken off, but in reality it is most as we saw with the example of Elijah. But the primary takeaway is that they were broken off. And this was done by God due to their unbelief in the gospel. (11:7-8) God broke them off and gave them a spirit of stupor. They were removed and discarded from any of the blessings promised to Abraham.
 2. And you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in - Of Gentiles, he calls them a wild olive tree. As distinguished from a planted, cultivated and fertilized tree. The Gentiles were wild and ungodly, lacking any of that spiritual goodness which Israel has been blessed with and nurtured throughout the years. Even though Israel's spiritual health had declined throughout most of the nation, they were the recipient of the owner's manual in spiritual gardening 101 and the root system is still holy and active. Whereas the Gentiles were wild and untamed, useful for nothing more than examples of poor living. And here they are being grafted in to partake of that healthy root and fatness of the tree.
 - a. This is contrary to the way things are normally done. Typically a wild olive tree would have been barren and unfruitful. And under normal circumstances you would not want to graft any part of an unfruitful tree into a healthy one. It usually goes the other way around. In that a healthy fruit bearing branch is grafted into a damaged or broken tree in order to make use of the already established root systems and the tree becomes useful once again. So we see that God's established plan is opposite that of man's and He brings us close to Himself in order that we shall be healed.
 - b. We may also notice that in this grafting, two separate entities become one. The Gentiles are now fused into the root system that makes up the church of God. And now partake in all the goodness and share in all the promises that once only pertained to Israel. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal

2:26-29, Eph 2:11-18.) This could be applied to everyone before being converted to Christ. We are all wild and part of the world and must be cut off from whatever tree we hang from and joined together in Christ.

3. Do not boast against the branches - Do not look down upon those natural branches. Do not become proud in your own eyes nor be conceited as if you have done something special. (Eph 2:8) We are saved only and exclusively by the grace of God and for the purpose of His glory. Our salvation should cause us to consider the riches of His goodness with all humility. As if to say "what have I done to deserve this?" Because the answer is nothing and so we should be exceedingly grateful.
 - a. But if you do boast, remember- Paul is not giving license to boast, only bringing to their attention the truth and reality of their circumstances, which is: "You do not support the root but the root supports you." Truly no one has any merit to boast, but even less so the Gentiles who are only drinking from the deep roots of the Israelites rich history with God. It was to Abraham and his descendants that the promises of salvation were made. And only for the grace of God does that pertain to anyone other than his natural seed. So if there is any inclination for Gentile converts to boast, they should check themselves quickly before their pride brings them low. Their sustenance is supported by the roots of another tree that has existed for thousands of years and they are only grafted in by His grace.
- ii. (V19) There is a luring temptation within us to see ourselves more valuable than we are. It is easy to do in this world, and especially so in America where we live in wealth, but we must always remember that everything is according to God's sovereign plan. Even for those who do not live in wealth, the temptation may look different in the form of envious entitlement, but we must always ground ourselves in His grace and our lack of holiness apart from Him. And this is what Paul is cautioning against in regards to the Gentiles. Cutting off the idea hopefully before it ever really begins to grow. The Israelites were not cut off in exchange for the Gentiles, as in to trade up for better stock, but they were cut off because of their unbelief which made room for the Gentiles.
- iii. (V20) Do not be haughty, but fear - It may be technically accurate to state that branches were broken off that I might be grafted in, but that doesn't mean as much as we want it to. For they were only cut off because of unbelief. And we were only grafted in because of the faith in which we stand. Faith in Christ, who is the true vine from which we are all supported. If they had continued in faith, they would still remain and if we had not been given the gift of faith, we would not stand at all. Therefore, being grafted into the vine has nothing to do with us and everything to do with Him. With this in mind we can understand why it is inappropriate to be haughty whilst also having a healthy fear of the vinedresser who is able to cut off the branches and throw them into the fire.
 - a. Any temptation of conceit we might harbor should be tempered by a healthy fear of God. (Heb 4:1, Phi 2:12,) Our entire fate is in the hands of God. We didn't earn salvation, it was a gift. We could have just as easily been tossed into the fire if not for His love, patience and grace. And He alone holds our fate in His hands. Life, death, health, sickness, suffering, enrichment. We may have been chosen as vessels of mercy, but we could just as easily be vessels of wrath. And something

else to keep in mind is that there have been many people who started the race, but did not finish the race.

- iv. (V21) If the natural branches were not spared, He may not spare you either - If unbelieving Israel, who are the natural branches, were not spared. What comfort and security do you find in yourself? The Jews were much more heavily invested in God's kingdom than were the Gentiles, going so far as to base their lives around His laws. They came forth from the root itself being the actual seed of Abraham. While Gentiles are but outsiders, wild branches without God's divine hand to graft us in. If He did not spare them, what makes you so certain He will spare you?
- a. This is a confusing portion of Scripture because Romans 8:28-39 speaks of God's elect being secure in their salvation. More or less saying that nothing shall separate us from the love of God. So how do we reconcile these two contrary thoughts? In a nutshell, it is as simple as the fact that your profession of faith doesn't guarantee salvation if you do not continue in your faith. (1 John 2:19) He is not saying that God's elect can lose their salvation, but only that we should look to Israel for our example and rightly persist in a holy and healthy fear of God, not becoming complacent in excess and liberty for when Israel descended into unbelief, they were not spared from His wrath.
 - b. It must be understood that God did not choose to cut off the people of Israel just to make room for you. He did not cut them off because there were too many people already saved. He cut them off because of their unbelief which Paul has stated clearly. But the significance of this is that it was less of God's choosing to cut them off as it was them choosing to separate themselves from God. They persisted in their unbelief and if we turn from our faith, even after professing Jesus, there is no guarantee that we will be spared either. We must always stay humble and grateful to the Lord for His hand in our life.
- v. (V22) Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: Mat 21:33-44 God's power is mighty in every way. He has the power to create and to destroy. If we consider the work of the heavens, of life we have received, of the grace He offers, we may understand a fragment of His goodness. Whereas His severity has been displayed throughout Scripture in various examples. Cast out of the Garden of Eden, the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues upon Egypt etc. It is important that we understand as much as we can about our holy God. For justice requires punishment and we cannot know what blessings we have without knowing what we have been spared from. For those who glorify Him, who persevere in faith and believe in His Son, glory and goodness will be bestowed upon them. Not in payment, but in recognition to share in the glory of His Son. While those who did not believe or even worse, fell away from their faith will be on the receiving end of the severity of God. Israel has already received some of this severity in being given a spirit of stupor, but much worse awaits them in their fiery fate. And Paul's caution to the Gentiles is that this fate awaits anyone who falls away from the faith. Therefore we must continue steadfast in the faith and "not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard." (Col 1:23). But why must we continue, I thought God nothing could separate us from the love of God? Answer, 1 John 2:19.

- g. 11:23-27 This section is generally straightforward in its meaning. The only real question that arises is what does he mean by "all Israel" in verse 26. But even this can be explained simply enough by using the same application he has been using this whole chapter. That is, as a nation. Israel has been through the ringer in regards to their relationship with God. Though Abraham was chosen to be the father of faith because of his belief in God, Israel, en masse, has been a stiff necked people and turned their back from Him over and over again. The very fact that they are still around speaks volumes to God's enduring word and His promises. But God is faithful despite man's unfaithfulness and He has affection for Israel. Though they are apostate now, there will be a time before Christ returns that they repent of their sinful rejection of the gospel in large scale numbers.
- i. (V23) if they do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted in- Speaking of Israel, he is continuing the line of thought from the previous verse. The Gentiles were grafted in because of Israel's rejection and subsequently being "cut off" from the root. It was harsh for Israel, but a blessing for the world. And since God is never far off, all they have to do is repent, turn to Him and search for Him with all their heart. (Jer 29:13) He will be found, when they give up their stubbornness and unbelief. And until this happens there is no practical difference between Israel and the unbelieving world.
1. This is much easier said than done, especially for Israel as God has given them a spirit of stupor (V8). They are currently blinded to the truth of the gospel and cannot turn because God has decreed it to be so. And until such time that God removes this spirit of stupor, they will remain blind. Only those who are part of God's elect will be able to see the truth and be saved.
 - ii. God is able to graft them in again - Nothing is impossible for God. He created man, He lifted Israel up, He made the covenants of His own freewill and volition, He cut off the dead branches as needed and gave them a spirit of stupor. If and when He desires to give them life, He is able to revive them and graft them in again.
 - iii. (24) Here we have a simple explanation as to why it should be so easy for God to do this very thing. The Gentiles who were foreign to the promises, wild by nature, were cut off from the world and grafted into the tree of promise. And for God this was no big deal. Although they knew nothing of the way unto salvation until God opened their eyes, once they received His free gift of life through faith, they died to their sins and became part of the tree of promise and blessing. And whereas it is easy for God to do this with unnatural branches, what could possibly come as a hindrance preventing Him from simply reattaching the natural branches at His pleasure? The answer obviously is nothing. God is able to graft branches in or cut them off as He pleases, whether natural or wild, God is able to save everyone who believes in His Son.
 1. There is a parallel between apostate Israel and the Gentile world. The gentiles, previous to hearing the gospel, were caught in the net of idolatry and false religion. They were trapped in bondage to this system of evil. In like manner, as punishment for rejecting Christ, Israel is stuck in a system of false religion until such time when God will remove the dust from their eyes and they will see the truth of the gospel.
 - iv. (V25) For I do not desire, brethren, that you be ignorant of this mystery - In biblical context, a mystery is something that was previously concealed, but has now been made

known. It's not that it was difficult or impossible to understand, but it was obscure and veiled. Paul is now removing this veil that we should understand the truth with clarity. This is direct revelation from God.

- v. Lest you should be wise in your own opinion - The idea here is that it would be an easy thing for anyone to speculate why God has cast aside the Jews. And if Paul did not explicitly tell them the reason for this, they would be left to their own wisdom which would in all likelihood lead them astray believing they are something special. When the reality is that they are no different and no better than unbelieving Israel.
- vi. blindness in part has happened to Israel - Not every Jew has been blinded as we can see with Paul and the other apostles. Though the vast majority were blind, many Jews were saved in those early days. So we can see that just as it says, it is only blindness in part. Not in the sense that some of it was veiled, but that a large portion of Israel was blind while the "remnant according to the election of grace" (V5) could see. And only until such time that the fullness of Gentiles has been reached. Which means there is a predetermined number of Gentiles that will be saved before God removes this partial blindness. And when it is removed, Israel will turn to God once more in repentance, no longer just a remnant, but all of Israel, in massive numbers, believing the gospel and recognizing the fact that Jesus is their awaited messiah.
- vii. (V26) And so all Israel will be saved - This is national or ethnic Israel. The natural born descendants of Abraham. And while it says all Israel will be saved, it is not agreed upon as to the precise meaning. There are two primary thoughts as to what this means. With the first line of thinking it could be taken literally. And in such a case every Israelite alive at the time will come to know the truth of the gospel and turn to Christ in faith. (See Zec 13) Whereas with the second line of thinking, this does not necessarily mean every single israelite, but the number of those saved in contrast against the remnant would be in such large numbers as to seem it is all of them. At least to such a degree that the world would consider them, as a nation, to have received divine favor once more. The language used is given as evidence to its meaning. (Contrast the fullness of the gentiles v25 and fullness of Israel v12.) In either case, this will not happen until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then all the elect of Israel will be saved. Those who were lost in the meantime, are lost in eternity. There is no retro salvation for those who have rejected Christ. Only those who believe will be saved.
- viii. As it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, - This is in reference to Jesus, and the Scripture is taken from Isaiah 59:20. And the purpose of bringing this up is to say that this has always been the case, Scripture has foretold of this very thing. The word "salvation" means: preservation or deliverance from harm, ruin, or loss. So for Jesus to be the deliverer is the same as saying Jesus is the savior, the one who brings salvation. And the fact that we need a deliverer is to say that there is something threatening that is about to happen. Of course we know this is the wrath of God. When Jesus comes again, the saints will be preserved, but the world will be in trouble. He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; He will bring salvation "to those who turn from transgression."
- ix. (V27) This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins - Continuing from Isaiah 59:21 and combined with Jer 31:33-34. The promise God has thus given to Israel

from long ago was to take away their sins. To make a new covenant with them such as was not like the original covenant their fathers received after leaving Egypt, in which was promises of blessings should they obey the law and promises of curses if they violate the law. No, in this new covenant, God has promised to put His "law in their minds, and write it on their hearts;" To be their God and they will be His people. It is not conditional upon the obedience to law and all the people will know Him from the least to the greatest. God will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins no more.

- h. 11:28-32 Wrapping up the discourse on Israel he summarizes the issue at hand. Israel has become enemies of the gospel to the good fortune of the Gentile world, but they are not cast off permanently. As he mentioned at the end of chapter 8 (28-39) Concerning the elect, nothing can separate them from the love of God. All things work together for the good of those who love God. In a long roundabout way, the apostasy of the Jews has brought salvation to the Gentiles even though the Gentiles have been a disobedient people. And now the mercy the Gentiles received will work in the hearts of the disobedient Jews, a plan of God's making.
- i. (V28) Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake- It is easy to see why the Jews are enemies to the gospel. They have stood against and persecuted anyone preaching the good news from the moment Jesus began His public ministry. To such a degree that they killed those whom they could. (Jesus, Stephen, James). And a quick side note, is that this isn't exclusive to Israel, but all the world is an enemy with the Gospel. There is no in between, there is no friendship, there is no understanding or "coexisting" relationship. If you are not with Christ, you are against Him and doing the work of the devil. "...friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4)
 - ii. Everyone who is not a Christian is an enemy of God and the gospel, but he says they are enemies for your sake, that is the Gentiles. The Jews were enemies of the gospel for the sake of the Gentiles in that their rejection made room for the Gentiles in the church of God. It was a blessing, "their fall is riches for the world" (v12) But there is another aspect here as well. The Jews had already rejected the Gospel as evidenced by nailing Jesus to the cross, but now they reject it even more because the Gentiles have been granted this favor. Thus giving more time for the fullness of the Gentiles to complete. "I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." (10:19)
 - iii. But concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers - This is an example of God's sovereign election and faithfulness to fulfill His promises, a master plan in the making. Though Israel is currently apostate and no different than the ungodly world, it will not always be the case. (Deut 4:37...25-40) "^{v37} because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them". From the passage in Deut we can see that all of this was foretold. God knew they would turn from Him and worship idols. He even warned them of the consequences, but He also promised that He would not completely forsake them, and that He would turn ungodliness away from them. And this because of His great love towards their ancestors, the patriarchs of old.
 - iv. (V29) For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable - In explanation of what he just said, the reason Israel remains beloved of God is because the gifts and calling of God

are irrevocable. This is strong language for the fact that irrevocable means unalterable, unable to be changed, it cannot be reversed or taken back, it is final. Before the foundation of the world, God has chosen an elect people that He would grant salvation. "whom He foreknew, He also predestined" This cannot be changed or altered. And so Paul is saying that the Jews are part of this election and therefore it will come to pass.

1. Paul distinguishes between gifts and calling. In chapter 9:4-5 he describes some of the gifts granted to Israel. "the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises" And most importantly of all the blessing of Christ having descended from their line in the flesh. They have been blessed with the oracles of God, to know the truth in a way no other nation or people has known. But there is a difference between having knowledge and applying that knowledge in the appropriate manner as we can see with the current state of Israel. However, the calling of God is the effectual calling that saves and brings us into relationship with Christ. It is the regeneration of our hearts that we may willingly believe.
 2. We might wonder why this is the case? Why would God choose to save all Israel or why they are beloved for the sake of their fathers even after they have rejected the gospel, but the answer in truth is that it has nothing to do with us. God is sovereign and may do as He pleases. He will work things out as He deems necessary to serve His purposes. How he goes about doing so is not something we should be questioning as His wisdom far exceeds our own. Yet even still, He has chosen to reveal this to us that we may glorify Him all the more.
- v. (V30-31) Once again to clarify and paint the picture for us, he shows that there is no difference between apostate Israel and the world. If God can save you, who were once disobedient, He can do the same for them.
1. For as you were once disobedient to God - This applies to every single person who has ever believed in Christ. Every believer was at one time an unbeliever and in rebellion to God, at enmity and separated. Disobedient means refusing to obey rules or someone in authority. We all refused to obey God before we were converted.
 2. Yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience - We have received compassion and mercy (9:15-16,18) It is not something we control or even something we deserve, but God has chosen to give it to us according to His great love and compassion. Eph 2:4-5 says God is "rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us." (1 Pet 1:3-5) And Paul says all of this was brought to the Gentiles because of Israel's disobedience. They worshipped false idols, murdered their prophets, crucified their messiah, and martyred the early evangelists. It was their own doing that caused the hand of God and the spirit of stupor to fall on them. And because of their continual rejection, God has offered salvation to the Gentiles.
 3. (V31) Just as God has shown mercy to the Gentiles because of the unbelief of the Jews, God will reverse this in the end and use the mercy He has shown to the Gentiles as a prodding tool to evoke the emotions of the Jews. "I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation," (10:19) This is all according to God's sovereign genius plan. The disobedience of the Jewish people has caused them to receive a punishment preventing them from seeing or hearing the truth. (V8,10) As a

- result, salvation and mercy have been granted to the Gentiles. Which will ultimately cause jealousy to the Jewish people who will in the end repent of their sins and turn to Christ for the forgiveness they need.
- vi. (V32) Paul now sums up his whole argument regarding the Jews from chapters 9-11. Through Jewish disobedience comes Gentile salvation, Through Gentile salvation comes Jewish salvation. God has committed the world to disobedience that His plan would come to fruition. The reference to "all" in this verse does not mean everyone without exception, but everyone without distinction. In that it applies to Greeks and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian Scythian, slave or free. (Col 3:11) "there is no difference, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (3:22-23) But the purpose for this was that He might have mercy on all. Again applying to all people without distinction. (If it was applied literally to all people, there would be no one in hell.) If the Jews didn't reject Christ, where would we be? Only God knows.
- i. 11:33-36 This section really closes out all of the doctrinal teaching of the gospel in the book of Romans with a fitting doxology (which is an expression of praise towards God). Up to this point we have been confronted with the depravity and sinfulness of man, introduced to the righteousness that comes apart from the law. We have seen that justification comes by faith in Christ, who stood in our place and reconciled us to God through His death. As a result, we have become one with Him and are now in the process of being sanctified for we have been adopted into His family, having received His Spirit for the purpose of being conformed to His image. And all of this is done by the sovereign will and purpose of Almighty God whose wisdom is beyond our approach. He has mercy on whom He wills offering grace as a benevolent creator and hardens others with the purest form of justice giving due punishment to those who deserve it, including His beloved Israel whom He has blinded. Yet for the love of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac He has not completely destroyed Israel, but has kept a remnant of faithful servants for Himself. And using their disobedience as a cause of action, He has offered salvation to the Gentiles which will provoke Israel to jealousy and in the end bring them back to Him once again.
- i. Oh, the depths and riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! - This is an emotional moment for the apostle. He has written this letter and worked his way through such an enormous amount of teaching that he has been up and down with us. But for him it is all still fresh and even more vivid than it might be for us. All of the truth contained in the mercy and substitutionary death of Christ. That God in His wisdom knew we could not obtain salvation on our own, despite trying our hardest to fulfill the law in futility. But has displayed His love through the death of His Son even while we were still sinners. And in such a way as to keep it hidden in plain sight from those who despise the riches of His Goodness. "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor 1:18) Truly there is no limit to the wisdom of God as evidenced by his incredible plan for Israel and the world at large. And Paul knows this better than anyone.
- ii. How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out! - Mankind is not capable of understanding the depths of God's wisdom. It is beyond our comprehension. And even his foolishness is wiser than man's wisdom (1 Cor 1:25) God is infinitely more

wise than we are, having determined all of human history before the foundation of the world. And He has kept the truth hidden from those who think themselves wise in their own eyes. The only ability we have to understand His judgements and ways are through His direct revelations with the help of the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 2:6-16) The more we understand God's wisdom, the more thoroughly we understand how little and insignificant we are. Paul is looking into the vastness of God's greatness with a front row seat having received all of this direct revelation. But we praise God for His wisdom, and for His love and for His willingness to share these mysteries.

- iii. (V34-35) Here he quotes Isaiah 40:13-14 as a rhetorical question. Who has known the mind of the Lord? And of course the answer is no one. Mankind is nothing but the dust of the earth, the creation of God Himself. "Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom 9:20) All of Isaiah 40 speaks to the magnificence of God's power, grace, wisdom and immutability. Everything we have is a gift from God. He owes us nothing and we owe Him everything. He created everything and we are the beneficiaries of His greatness. All of our wisdom is nothing in His eyes and we cannot possibly counsel Him. "But He *is* unique, and who can make Him change? And *whatever* His soul desires, *that* He does." (Job 23:13) God is sovereign. "Why do you contend with Him? For He does not give an accounting of any of His words." (Job 33:13)
- iv. (V36) Finally we come to a close on the truth of the sovereignty of God. God truly is sovereign in a way that no human could ever be. (Isa 46:8-10, 48:3) He does as he pleases, how he pleases, when He pleases with whom He pleases. There is no accounting necessary, there is no right to question His ways, but in all things regarding God, a healthy fear is advisable. The statement Paul makes here includes all things ever created. Nothing exists outside of this statement except God Himself. All things come from God, they are sustained by Him and return to Him.
- v. For all things are of Him - All of creation whether in heaven or on earth was made by Him. He is the source of everything. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1) Life, matter, thoughts and truth. He is the source of it all. "For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God." (1 Cor 11:12). "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." (Col 1:16-17)
- vi. And through Him - (1 Cor 8:6) It is God who sustains and maintains all that He has made. If He would remove Himself from His creation, everything would spin into chaos. The laws of physics and gravity, the solar system etc. all would fall out of balance without God actively holding things in place. In regards to salvation, it is He who brings us to Him. It is He who gives us His spirit and sanctifies us. He is the mover and the determiner of all events in history. Creation, life, death, triumphs and tribulations. All is because of Him.
- vii. And to Him - "For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return." But more aptly because all things are done for His purpose. And all things proceed together in the direction of His choosing which is for His glory and honor. "all things work together for good to those

who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose." Everything in this universe is working in conjunction with everything else. It has all been planned and is all actively working towards the fulfillment of said plan, that He may be properly seen and worshiped as God, the one and only Creator and our beloved Father. To whom be glory forever. Amen (Gal 1:5, Php 4:20, 2 Tim 4:18, Heb 13:21)

66. Self test chapter 11

- a. (V5) What does it mean that God has preserved a remnant? How can we prove there is a remnant?
- b. How or why is it according to the election of grace?
- c. (V7) Who is Paul speaking about in reference to "the elect" and "the rest"?
- d. If Israel was truly seeking God, why would God not save them?
- e. (V8) Why did God give them a spirit of stupor? And if He gave them this spirit so they could not see, why then are they still held accountable for not being able to see?
- f. (V15) List two positive results that occurred as a result of Israel being cast away:
- g. (V16) Who is "the root" and "the branches" speaking of?
- h. (V18-20) The Gentiles are told not to boast and not to be haughty, but fear; why is this?
- i. Compare verse 22 and 29. To rephrase verse 22, we are told that we will be cut off if we do not continue in His goodness. But verse 29 says "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." In your own words reconcile this seeming contradiction.
- j. Explain the sequence of events for Israel's redemption: i.e how the gentiles fit in and when this will take place?

67. Review of Chapter 11: We come to the final arguments and evidence for Israel: "Are they permanently cast aside? Has the Gentile world replaced them? What will happen to them in the end? Paul answers all of this with as much care and thought as he has given this entire letter. He loves his countrymen and desires their salvation, but God has given Israel a spirit of stupor in punishment for the continual rejection of His ways. Yet because of His great love and promises to the patriarchs, God has preserved for Himself a remnant according to His election of grace. In this He has sovereignly chosen who will receive His mercy and granted them the faith necessary to believe in His Son.

The Jews are not totally or permanently forsaken, but due to their rejection of the gospel, salvation through faith in Christ has been preached to the Gentiles. And such a gift is cause for praise and worship, however it must be balanced with a healthy fear for the one who is able to destroy the soul. Because if Israel, who was and has been the chosen people of God, are not spared from His wrath, why should the Gentiles believe anything differently about themselves? The fact of the matter is that for anyone to persevere, God is required to hold them in place. This is not something we can do on our own, but must always understand our place in humility, with all thanksgiving. Therefore we should always pray to remain in His goodness, seeking forgiveness as often as necessary and submitting to His will at all times.

God has been gracious to the Gentile world. He has grafted us into the tree that once belonged exclusively to the Jews. As such we should be grateful and thankful to the Jewish people, pitying their fall and praying always for their salvation and return to God. For God is able to graft them back into His holy tree once more. And all of this has been according to God's great plan of salvation. He warned Israel what would happen when they turn from Him, He foretold of the Gentiles acceptance into His church and now that it has happened, we await the fulness of the Gentiles that Israel as a whole will be brought back to grace once more. And God will use the mercy He has granted the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy which will bring them back to Him in the end.

In final thought, God is infinitely wise and sovereign in every way. Only He is capable of such a plan. Only He could work things out in such a manner. He is just, He is loving and merciful and He is worthy of all praise and honor. His glory is our chief aim. For He is God and there is no other.

68. Chapter 12 intro: Having addressed in depth the mysteries and intellectual understandings of what has taken place in regards to our salvation, we now proceed to the practical application. How are we to live now that we are saved? We have been freed from the law and live by grace, but what does that mean for our everyday lives? Though many would take the opportunity to enhance our liberty beyond godly living, we are not to partake in the filthiness of the world. Paul opens up with our reasonable service, that we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice for all that we have been granted. He continues on to express that we are all members in the body of Christ with varying gifts and that we should use those gifts to the extent they have been granted to us and not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. And finally he closes the chapter with brief exhortations regarding what is right and holy.

69. 12:1-2 Moving on from the important detailed teachings, Paul bridges the gap with a weighty “therefore”. “I beseech you therefore, brethren”. As if to say, keep all of this mind as we consider what comes next. Naturally we are to serve God, this is our reasonable service, but we cannot do this properly unless we give all of ourselves to Him, both body and mind.
- a. I beseech you therefore, brethren - This is an urgent request. Paul understands the importance of giving yourself to God. He also understands the opposition to live by grace as well as those who would undermine said grace and take advantage of this doctrine. Thus there is an urgency to consider all that has taken place and live accordingly.
 - b. By the mercies of God - One of the primary reasons to consider all of this as serious as it needs to be is for the mercy we have all been granted. Paul has already gone into depth regarding God’s sovereignty and election. We know that not everyone will be saved, and we know that our salvation is an exclusive unearned gift that has many sub categories of gifts, (the forgiveness of sins, justification, sanctification, glorification, being grafted into the church of God, adopted in the holy family, the fact that Jesus died specifically for you). Therefore as we have been blessed with such a gift, to neglect it would be to insult the Father who has given you everything.
 - c. Present your bodies a living sacrifice - Taken literally, consider and present your physical body to God as a living sacrifice. (6:12-13) Show yourself to God as being alive. Give to Him what is His and use your members as instruments of righteousness.
 - i. In the Old Testament the sacrifice was prescribed by God for various things. He specified exactly what to bring and how it was to be presented. There were five different types of offerings (burnt, grain, peace, sin and trespass) but generally speaking these could be categorized into two groups. Offerings for sin and offerings of thanks. Our sins have already been covered by the offering of Jesus who sacrificed Himself on our behalf. (Heb 9:22-28) Therefore the only offering we can give is one of thanks. Yet even in the Old Testament these offerings of thanks were not mandatory. They were voluntary, freewill offerings. The same applies now, but the understanding is deepened. It’s not just the provisions that God has blessed us with, but life itself and adoption into His family, to partake in His glory.
 - ii. What do we sacrifice now? We certainly don’t need to offer animals and God is no longer asking us for grain. He is asking for something far more costly, your entire life and soul. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ (Mat 22:37) This is not something we can do casually or part time, it is complete dedication. It is a voluntary offering of thanks and praise and one that Paul is urging us to bring to God.
 - iii. There is a negative aspect, avoid doing those things unbecoming of holiness. (1 Cor 10:13) Back in chapter 6:12 we read “do not let sin reign in your mortal body” We have a choice and God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are capable of handling. This should give us great comfort because it means all of our sins are conquerable with the help of the Holy Spirit. It doesn’t mean it will be easy, but it is possible to overcome them and He will provide a way to do so.
 - iv. Then there is the positive, making use of our bodies to glorify God. (1 Cor 6:19-20) Our bodies are not our own. We have been bought and paid for with the blood of Christ. If

the mercies of God don't move you to consider your behaviors more seriously, perhaps the fact that your body is host to the Holy Spirit will. But how do we do this, what does it look like to glorify God with our bodies? It could be a wide variety of things, praising God with our lips, listening to hymns and songs of praise, using our eyes, mind and heart to read the Bible, meditate and pray. Physically going to church or Bible study, being present and aware of what the Holy Spirit might lead you to. In a more general sense, obeying His word, winning others to Christ, doing good deeds and if need be we suffer persecution "if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." (1 Pet 4:16)

- d. Holy, acceptable - We can present our bodies to God in multiple ways, but in all aspects it needs to be Holy to be acceptable. God would not receive a blemished lamb, we cannot offer Him substandard sacrifices either. If it doesn't come from a pure heart or if it doesn't cost us anything, the service and sacrifice is not going to be received as such. Jesus said "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. " Our service to God needs to be for Him and it should be kept between Him and you. And we can see from the instance in (Mark 12:41-44) that the widow gave more than the rich even though it was only to mites because she gave all she had while they only from their abundance.
- e. Your reasonable service - It is reasonable to live this way. To live honorably and holy. God has given us an intellectual understanding and a mind capable of reasoning. There are some things we must accept by faith, but by and large what He asks of us is not unreasonable. Furthermore, the worship we offer to God in Spirit, body and mind are reasonable gifts to the one who has given us life. We cannot give Him anything He doesn't already have and therefore our gratitude, love and service are just about all we can offer. This extends to all of His creation. Loving our neighbors and enemies is another way of offering reasonable service to God.
- f. Do not be conformed to this world - Rather be imitators of God. (Eph 5:1) This should be seen as part of your reasonable service. We know what the world has in store for us. A life of sin apart from God and nothing good can come from it. (Eph 2:1-3) Walking according to the course of the world is the same as walking according to "the prince of the power of the air", that is Satan. He is the one responsible for the twisted culture we see all around us. The upside down lies and depraved lack of morality, the vanity and self centered lifestyle. And so the exhortation is to recognize this and separate yourself from the world. To be different from the children of wrath and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. (Eph 5:8-11) We cannot have one foot in the world and one foot walking the narrow path. (James 4:4)
- i. Any time we stray from the narrow path we are venturing into the world and away from God. It is easy to think we can influence others and be a change for good, but we must be careful how we attempt to do so, for "evil company corrupts good habits." (1 Cor 15:33) If you are saved, it will lead you to temptation and possibly sin which could bring chastisement or grieving of the Holy Spirit or poor testimony among unbelievers. And if you are yet to be saved, surrounding yourself with unholy people will only bring you down and away from the word of God which is your only hope of salvation. The world

system is one designed for pleasure and vice. Everyone wants to be hip and cool and on top “winning”, doing only what feels good. But that is not how Christians should operate. (Mat 20:24-28)

- g. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind - (1 Pet 2:1-3) “Desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby”. This is taking an active role in our progressive sanctification. Knowing where we came from, it is important to fully dedicate ourselves to the renewing of our minds. Understanding Scripture and gaining the knowledge of God is how we grow as saints. If we do not know the will of God we cannot separate ourselves from the world. (1 Pet 2:9-12) If we do not know how we should act, we will continue in our old ways. We were called out of darkness, but we know that Christians still sin and it's easy to deceive ourselves at times and overlook things we probably shouldn't. But the more we transform our minds and conform ourselves to His will, the less we will willingly participate in worldly affairs.
 - i. It is also important to note that this is not something we can do on our own. Every step of salvation, whether justification, sanctification or glorification, is being brought about by the power of God. However there is a human element involved and we are expected to participate to the extent God has made possible. “put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph 4:22-24) God has given us a new heart with new desires and now we must take this, cultivate it and offer ourselves back to Him for His glory.
 - h. Prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. - If we walk according to the path God has set for us we will prove to ourselves what is the will of God. Jesus said “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*.” (John 7:16-17) So if we truly desire to do the will of God we must renew our minds through study of His word and actively seek to separate from the world and be different; be holy. In doing this we will put knowledge and application to practice and see that His will is truly good and acceptable and perfect, i.e we would choose it for ourselves if we were as wise as God. We would see that it is well pleasing and that it is complete, whole and lacking in nothing. If we were to walk and live entirely within the narrow path, we would have no additional wants, needs or desires.
- 70. 12:3-8 Following the opening verses is the immediate application for how this all works out in our lives and it begins with serving God and serving others. We offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God for He has given us everything we need. He is our strength, and wisdom and without Him we are nothing. Therefore as we should understand this, the proper attitude is one of humility and to realize that what gifts we do have are gifts from God to be used for the benefit of all.
 - a. (V3) Paul now cautions us against the sin of pride, but does so with the reminder that what he is saying comes directly from the grace and authority given him by Jesus. He has already done this in the beginning of the epistle (1:5) and will do so again later on (15:15) But the purpose of stating this is to say that he has been called to deliver this message. It

isn't something that is simply pressing on his heart, but it is the required message that our king desires for us to hear. It is an all inclusive message meant for every Christian. Not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Why is this necessary? Well first of all, humility cannot be underestimated. "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6) We need to constantly recall that salvation is a gift as well as any other spiritual gifts we may have been granted. Paul has just walked us through 11 chapters of the abundant blessings of God and it might be tempting to think yourself better than others. So he gets out ahead of the game here to keep us in check.

- i. To think soberly about this with a right mind we must understand the reality and circumstance of our position. Our entire life is the result of God pulling strings. From the time we were born, the place we were born, the families we were born into, the people in our lives growing up, our education, the people we met along the way, the church we find ourselves in. Even our thoughts and hearts and character are influenced by God. We did nothing on our own, we did nothing to earn salvation and we did nothing to deserve what God has given us. We have no right to think highly of ourselves at all, but should in all circumstances be thanking God and praising Him for what He has done. (Gal 6:3 "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.") God is the one who is worthy of praise and He is the one who made you to see even that. That is partly why your reasonable service is to offer yourself a living sacrifice.
 - ii. Another thing to remember is that we are to look to Jesus for our example. He says in Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." And in Luke 9:23 "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Denying ourselves includes denying any thoughts of grandeur and importance. If Jesus, the creator of the universe, with a name above all names could humble Himself, we ought to as well.
 - iii. God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. In this regard he is not speaking about saving faith, but a measure of faith to serve the Lord in the body of Christ. We have been given spiritual gifts, but we are not always using them. If someone has the gift to preach, he may not be using this gift in faith, but might be preaching in the flesh. It could be the same with any gift... teaching, giving, or singing. Serving others can be done in the spirit or in the flesh and we must rely on Christ for this faith. Constantly praying for humility and for the proper heart and mindset to let our service be for the glory of God and the benefit of others and not ourselves.
- b. (V4-5) 1 Corinthians chapter 12 lays out this idea more fully. Just as a human body has many differing parts, but all of those parts work together for the benefit of the body, All Christians are members of the body of Christ and all serve an important function that Christ has set us to. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:" (1 Cor 12:4-7) We are not just members of the body of Christ, but of each other as well. Therefore our service that we desire to give to God should also be directed towards the saints who are actually part of ourselves. And to neglect saints in need is to neglect Jesus Himself, who expressed as much in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Mat 25:31-46)

"inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' and "inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.'

- c. (V6-8) (1 Cor 7:7, 12:7, 1 Pet 4:7-11) We have all been given spiritual gifts of one sort or another. Not everyone has the same gift, but all work together for the benefit of the whole. "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." It is our right and proper duty to use these gifts to uplift, exhort and minister to the body of Christ. Paul breaks down a list of these gifts, though not exhaustive to illustrate some differences we might encounter.
- i. Prophecy - to speak forth before others. Meaning that you stand before others and speak, speaking what God has given you to say. There are two aspects to prophecy. Foretelling and forthtelling. Foretelling is what was given in the first century and earlier, the ability to predict the future or speak about things which haven't happened yet or to speak special revelation that was given before the new testament was complete. This gift is no longer in operation. (1 Cor 13:8-9) The completion of the New testament has finalized the special revelation of God. Forthtelling on the other hand has remained. This simply means taking the body of revelation as recorded in the word of God and being able to speak and explain what is written in the word of God in a practical way. Today we would call this preaching. "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." (1 Cor 14:3) Differing from teaching in the sense that teaching is for information and interpretation. Preaching is the heralding of God's word intending to move people to act upon the truth that is taught. In order to preach you must be able to teach, but not all teachers are preachers. Preachers must be able to persuade and excite as well to comfort.
1. In proportion to our faith - There are two different kinds of faith. Objective and subjective. Objective faith is THE faith... the doctrine which the church teaches and that we must believe in order to be saved. Subjective faith is the exercise of our faith. Our trust in God from moment to moment. There seems to be some disagreement as to what is actually being said here, whether to preach or utilize our gifts according to the full measure of our subjective faith or whether we must only preach and use these gifts in concordance with the sound doctrines and faith of the church. The latter opinion is accurate in its own merit even if the intended delivery was to say that we must prophesy with the full measure of faith that we can muster up. Therefore your preaching must be consistent with THE faith and nothing should be said that contradicts the sound doctrine of Scripture.
- ii. Ministry - This is the service of others. A God given ability and desire to serve others. Sometimes behind the scenes, which is no less important than those services and deeds that are out in the open. Paul says in 1 Cor 12:22-24 that those parts which are not seen have been given greater honor. We can consider the organs versus a mustache. Though hidden, the function is vital and God has placed these ministers where He needs them and where their service will benefit the body greatly.
- iii. Teaching - We have already discussed the difference between teaching and preaching. But teaching is the ability to take the word of God and clarify it with correctness and a

great sense of insight. It necessarily comes with a desire to study and read in order to speak accurately about the subject at hand.

- iv. Exhortation - is the ability to urge someone to do something. In biblical terms we are talking about encouraging, challenging, motivating, lifting someone up or stirring up their emotions to take steps towards God or in conjunction with His will. We are all called to exhort, but some are much better than others.
- v. Giving with liberality - We are also all called to give, but God has given some people an unusual openhearted mentality with their possessions. They are generous and do not hold on tightly to their belongings. To the point that they take more pleasure in giving to someone else, rather than keeping it for themselves. They give over and above what might be considered reasonable, and it brings great blessing to the body of Christ.
- vi. Leading with diligence - There are some who see a need and organize a strategy that involves others. Then they move in this direction leading others in service of the Lord. To do so with diligence means they are careful and persistent and hardworking. When obstacles arise they find ways to work through them. There is also an aspect of getting things done as opposed to prolonged planning.
- vii. Showing mercy with cheerfulness - Having mercy is showing pity to someone who is hurting or in need. There are some who are more aware of others in need. Gravitating to those who might not be upfront about their needs or those who are sitting off in the distance. There is compassion and an exuberance to do this kind of thing.

71. 12:9-21 Moving past the individualized gifts we may have been given, Paul now lists a specific set of behaviors that should be common amongst all Christians. If love for God and love for others is set firmly in our hearts, these descriptive actions should be a reality in our lives. We might also take notice that this is the first time in his letter to the Romans that he has given a detailed list of practical actions and behaviors to be applied in our lives which highlights the importance of understanding the doctrines of our faith. That being said, understanding doctrine and putting it all into practice are two very different things. It's one thing to study and to know what God has done for us, it's an entirely separate thing to now act for God and live like Christ has shown us to live.

- a. (V9) Let love be without hypocrisy - Let it be genuine, real and from the heart. This is the mark of true believers, love for God and love for the saints, our brothers and sisters who make up the body of Christ. It is so important that Jesus gives this to us as a command in John 13:34-35. This is how the world will recognize us, because our actions are focused outwardly towards others instead of inwardly on ourselves. But it's not as simple as just focusing outward and doing things for others, it must be a genuine love from within that is the motivating factor. To love as Jesus loved. (1 Cor 13:1-3) Without love there is nothing worthwhile in this life. Our words are empty and our actions profit us nothing. Love is the essence of Christianity and what God has wanted from us all along. (Rom 13:8-10) And if you ever wonder whether or not you are saved, one of the self tests we might apply is love for our brother. (1 John 3:10-15) "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother abides in death." If we do not love our brother, we have not yet passed from death into life.

- i. What is love? It is sacrificial, unselfish giving of yourself to seek the highest good for others. It is contrary to lust in that love gives while lust takes. It costs you something. It is selfless, self giving, self denying. If we genuinely love someone else, we will do for them, those things that will build them up and affirm them to help in their Christian life. Parents might understand this kind of love towards their children, but we need to expand our scope of love to others. Which stems from the sacrifice he mentioned in verse 1. It is a choice in the same way God chose to love us from before the foundation of the world. The same way Jesus gave Himself for us. And when we do this we will prove to ourselves what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- ii. Paul says to do all of this without hypocrisy. We cannot pretend to be someone we are not. Going to church and acting as Christians on Sunday, but going to work on Monday and acting like the world. Pretending to be spiritual benefits us nothing as we see in 1 Cor 13:1-3). Whatever you do, if it isn't real love, it is nothing. But this is to be applied in every aspect of our lives which takes contemplation and the help of the Holy Spirit. We must ask God to help us in this area to remove any falsehoods, any pretense or any desires that are ungodly. Jesus called out the Pharisees for this kind of thing multiple times. (Mat 6:2,5,16, 23:5) "But all their works they do to be seen by men."
- b. Abhor what is evil - This is also part of loving others, but is seen from the opposite end. True love hates evil and despises what hurts others. It is a genuine concern for other Christians. We are to reject evil, that is; to reject the wickedness and sinfulness that brings harm to others. We are called to have disdain for evil. Whether it's in our life or others. But we must first look to ourself and remove the planks from our own eyes because sin is not self contained. Sin in our lives hurts others, sometimes directly i.e stealing or adultery, sometimes indirectly i.e withholding the love that is due to them, ignoring their needs. But we must hate it with such passion that we are doing what we can to exterminate it whether in our lives personally or in those we care about. Loving them enough to confront whatever sinful behavior might manifest itself. For their sake as well as for others. (Mat 18:15-17) There is no neutrality when it comes to evil.
- c. Cling to what is good - Again this is simply a part of true love. We cannot abhor evil if we do not hold tightly to what is good, for ourselves and others. Cling to it like glue. Good is referring to that which is right, morally excellent and honorable. Good is holiness, godliness and righteousness. We must cling to this in our own lives and promote it in the lives of others, placing high value on these things. We can and should be demonstrating this through our words and actions.
- d. (V10) Be kindly affectionate to one another in brotherly love - In a sense this is regarding loyalty towards your brothers and sisters and Christ. We are family and should treat each other as so. We do not choose our brothers and sisters, but we have to live with them. Therefore be kind and compassionate to each other, committed to their wellbeing, beginning with our personal family and local church. It is more difficult in some aspects to stick it out in rough times with those closest to you then it is to do random acts of kindness to those you barely know. But this is part of our sacrificial love.
- e. In honor giving preference to one another - This is humility, to put others before yourself. It shows honor and respect to do this. It elevates them and lifts them up to a special place. It

doesn't put them down, but seeks what is good for them even at the cost of our own interests. "let each esteem others better than himself." (Phi 2:3-4) (Luke 14:7-14)(Eph 5:21)

- f. (V11) Not lagging in diligence - Diligence is defined as: 1. steady, devoted and energetic effort to accomplish a task. Or 2. the attention and care legally expected or required of a person. But in either case we can see that diligence is focused effort with an objective purpose. There is no procrastination, it's doing what needs to be done with attention and zeal. We're not dragging our feet thinking of all the "fun" stuff we might be doing, but stepping forward when things need to be done because we want to help those we love.
- g. Fervent in spirit - Love has passion to it, an overflowing and outpouring of the heart. Fervent is another word for zealous. To be marked by or to exhibit great intensity or feeling. Another definition is: "very hot, glowing". Which means the phrase "on fire for the Lord" is appropriate for Christians. So we are to be intentional in our actions, looking for ways to be helpful from the love that is within us.
- h. Serving the Lord - If we are not intentional in purpose and have no explicit cause, then zeal is just a feeling within us. And if not put to use could cause a variety of issues. But we are to use this fervent diligence to serve the Lord, by serving others, primarily the body of Christ. "Inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me." (Mat 24:40) Though it's not just fellow Christians we are to love, but everyone, including our enemies. And the love we display draws others towards Christ. But the important aspect to remember here is that we are servants, bought and paid for. Thus the more accurate term is slave. We are to serve the Lord as a slave serves his master, in obedience. Which means we are not lazy or slothful. We do not neglect the work of God. We do not let others continuously serve us, but we actively participate in the work of Christ however we can. And the work of Christ is to serve others. "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mat 20:28)
- i. (V12) Rejoicing in hope - To rejoice is to give joy; to gladden. Or to feel joy or great delight. We can and should be doing both through our hope in Christ and the glory of God. (Rom 5:2) The fruit of the Spirit is love...joy...peace, longsuffering etc. (Gal 5:22). We are joyful for the abundant love we have experienced from our heavenly Father. And we bring this joy to others, when we love them and serve them with gladness and cheer. (Maybe you can recall a time when someone did something completely unexpected entirely for your benefit with a smile on their face. We cry with tears of joy.) Yet It's not just what you do, but how you do it. We can't expect to share this joy by doing things mechanically or reluctantly. We must truly desire the best for others.
- j. Patient in tribulation - Love.... "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Cor 13:7) And we need only look to the cross to see such an example. Jesus didn't resist or even complain about what was happening. And He taught us to do the same. (Mat 5:38-41) Literally "I tell you not to resist an evil person." God is patient and longsuffering, therefore we emulate Him in this regard. And besides this, we know that all things pass through His hands and "all things work together for good to those who love God." (Rom 8:28) Therefore it is not only possible to be patient in tribulation, but we can glory in it as well. (Rom 5:3-5)

- k. Continuing steadfastly in prayer - This is prayer for others. James 5:16: "Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Part of our devotion to the body of Christ is to pray for others. Sometimes it's easy to just give someone something they need and be done with it, but a mark of love is the time we give them even when they aren't present. Prayers of intercession for others also help us grow and expand our love.
- l. (V13) Distributing to the needs of saints - When you "love your neighbor as yourself" it is impossible to ignore their needs. The early church literally sold their possessions and had all things in common, sharing with anyone who had need. (Acts 2:44-45) To love someone is to care for them as they need to be cared for. If they are cold, it isn't enough to just say "be warm", but we act and give because they need it. (James 2:15-17) Though it's important that this doesn't become a begrudging obligation. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*....., but have not love, it profits me nothing." (1 Cor 13:3) It will still help them and therefore it is still right to give, but God doesn't want us to do things grudgingly or out of necessity. (2 Cor 9:6-9) And we certainly don't want bitterness creeping in our hearts.
- m. Given to hospitality - To go out of your way to make others comfortable and feel like they belong. We don't want to be exclusive or have clicks within the body of Christ. We want To welcome guests and new believers into fellowship and show them the love of Christ. Heb 13:1-2 "Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels."
- n. (V14-18) We are still speaking of Christian behaviors and this is certainly inclusive under the broader topic of love. However, whereas verses 9-13 primarily dealt with our love towards fellow Christians, we now begin to look outside the body of Christ and how we are to interact with those who are not part of our family, even our enemies.
- o. Bless those who persecute you - Though easier said than done, this is straightforward. Even when others are tearing us down, we are to lift them up. To bless means: to give praise, to speak well of, to invoke divine care, to confer prosperity or happiness upon another. We are to do this even while they persecute us; harassing or punishing intending to injure, grieve or afflict us. He even repeats this again, "bless and do not curse" to indicate it wasn't written by mistake. And that's because it is so contrary to human instincts. We know the early Christians were being persecuted or in fear of persecution, being ostracized from the Jewish temples or circles of friends. Jesus said the same thing in Mat 5:44 "bless those who curse you... and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." Again, this is easier said than done. There is no real challenge to love your friends or love those who love you, but to love your enemies and bless those who persecute you takes an act of God and a change of heart to be able to emulate Him in this way.
- p. Rejoice with those who rejoice - We are to have empathy with others. To share in their feelings. It may not sound difficult or like a big deal to rejoice with those who rejoice, but it's easy to get caught up in envy and jealousy. "You shall not covet...anything that is your neighbor's" (Exo 20:17) This would include their successes. We are often competitive with others, but we should be glad when others succeed. For one, God has given us everything we need. Salvation above all things is of the highest value and therefore we are already rich and need not store up treasures on earth. If God has given to someone more abundantly, rejoice with them. In addition to this we don't want to bring them down. It's easy

to ruin someone's joy with your own bitterness and this does not exemplify Christ or exhibit Christian value. And in regards to the body of Christ, if it happens to one it happens to all whether success or failure. (1 Cor 12:26)

- q. Weep with those who weep - "Be of one mind, having compassion for one another;" (1 Pet 3:8) Another characteristic we are called to practice is sympathy for others. Visiting those in the hospital, experiencing their pain with them. To put ourselves in their shoes as much as possible and to comfort them in times of need. There is comfort knowing that others care for you and being there for someone in times of distress can ease the burden. This is a challenge for some more than others, and women may have a stronger sense of empathy/sympathy than men, but we are all called to this purpose for we are all connected.
- r. Be of the same mind toward one another - He is talking partiality. "You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty..." (Lev 19:15) This is not thinking the same things as fellow Christians, but thinking the same way about fellow Christians. I.e we are all sinners, fallen short of the glory, but have been saved and adopted into the royal family. Therefore we should treat each other as such and not give special treatment to someone because of earthly appearances. Rich or poor, black or white, male or female, Gentile or Jew. We should not be ashamed to associate with the saints nor should we be seeking out the favor and attention of those who might be able to promote us. (James 2:1-9)
- s. Do not set your mind on high things but associate with the humble - Similar in manner to what he just said, in regards to treating everyone the same, but this goes a step further to say that we should especially seek out and associate with those of humble status, demeanor and presence. That is those who do not draw attention to themselves or who do not think themselves worthy of attention. We should take care to make sure all of our brothers and sisters are being ministered to and cared for. Do not think highly of yourself or that you are better than others, too important to interact or be seen with those below you. We all need love and prayer. And oftentimes the humble are too humble to ask for it and so we should make ourselves available to them.
- t. Do not be wise in your own estimation - In concordance with associating with the humble, let us humble ourselves. We certainly don't know everything there is to know and nobody likes a know it all. It's not that we shouldn't be wise, because we should. And Scripture even tells us to ask for wisdom "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5) Proverbs chapter 2 speaks to the value of wisdom. But this wisdom is not of our own, it is a gift of God. And there is a temptation at times to have an opinion about everything and to think we have all the answers, but we don't. Not only that, but there is humility in asking others what they think. So let's be aware of this and caution ourselves in this regard.
- u. Repay no one evil for evil - This may be one of the more difficult teachings to embrace. It's easy to get caught up in anger and personal vengeance. When we have been wronged or we are openly attacked, it is a natural instinct to want immediate justice. But it's not our place and we are not permitted to enact personal justice. We are called to not only resist this feeling and allow God to handle the situation (V19), but to go even further and not to resist an evil person. "But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." (Mat 5:39)

- i. It is also important to understand, this doesn't mean there is no room recourse or self defense. We are not called to sit by and watch passively as a murderer destroys our family. And If a neighbor maliciously destroys your property, justice demands he be rebuked and punished, but we cannot allow ourselves to become the judge, jury and executioner. The old law an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth was distorted to mean something it never was. The original purpose of this law in Exo 21:24, Lev 24:20, and Deut 19:21 was to say that if we cause harm or damage, it is right that we repay exactly what was lost or damaged, however this was to be done only in accordance with the law, by the mouth of two or three witnesses before a judge. And that is still how it must be applied today; in a lawful manner.
- ii. The implication of Jesus' teaching must be understood as a message of preparedness in the Christian heart to suffer tribulation for the sake of others. In John chapter 18:22 Jesus was struck on the cheek by one of the officers of the high priest. Jesus did not literally turn the other one, but responded with "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?" He didn't shy away from the slap or confront the man angrily. He corrected the man and rebuked his wrongdoing. This could have invoked another slap or it could have worked in the man's heart. The point is that we are to be a light in the darkness and there are always those in need of gospel truth. We will not win anyone to Christ through anger and violence and so we must be willing to suffer wrong in order to show others the peace of God within us.
- v. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men - Take heed to always consider and act upon what is good and proper before the Lord because He is always watching and so is the world. On one hand we don't want to do things that reflect poorly or questionably on Christ. And on the other we want to lead lost souls to Christ. In many ways it's easier to be around Christians who are looking out for each other and helping each other, but our hearts must be set on doing the right thing at all times even when interacting in the secular world. Just because we can do something, doesn't mean we should. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*." (1 Cor 10:23-24) This could be simplified by always asking ourselves what would Jesus do? And we can be certain it would always be good, proper and honest with a heart and mind towards serving others.
- w. If it is possible...live peaceably with all men - This is the ability to get along with others. To avoid needless arguments and refraining from being needlessly offensive. That is not to say that we avoid speaking the truth or avoid confronting sin, because we must do these things, however there are some things that are better left unsaid. And there is a measure of grace that we should extend towards others as well. Though as we will notice, he starts off by saying "If it is possible, as much as depends on you", and this is because it's not always possible and we can't always avoid it. We won't be able to get along with everyone and the world is sure to hate us at times. Jesus says in John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." The world hates the light; "everyone practicing evil hates the light".(John 3:20) But blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. (Mat 5:9) So it

will not always be possible to live peaceably with others, but it is always possible to ask God for an abundance of spiritual fruit that will help us live peaceably with others.

- x. (V19-21) Closely related to the previous verses we see an expansion and explanation of why we ought to act in this manner. How should we respond when someone wrongs us? Ultimately we are to follow Christ's example by repaying no one evil for evil and living peaceably with all men, but here we see that this is because God is the ultimate judge. He will determine proper punishment while we are to set our focus on winning souls.
 - i. To some degree we can take a measure of our walk with God through our instinctive reactions. How do we react in stressful situations? It's much easier to show the love of God when everyone is kind and life is running smoothly, but how do we handle being mistreated, wronged or taken advantage of? Do we respond with anger? Or is there a calm understanding of sin that is willing to overlook the wrongs? If we have internalized the thorough evilness of sin, it doesn't make sense to respond negatively ("they know not what they do"). So Paul gives us a set of instructions from a godly viewpoint to help us prepare for this scenario ahead of time.
 - ii. Do not avenge yourselves - There is no wiggle room in this area. Christians are not permitted to take justice into their own hands. The idea of revenge or "getting even" is contrary to the love of Christ. To avenge means: to inflict harm in return for an injury or wrong done to oneself or another. This is not self defense, but retaliation. Why should we not avenge ourselves? Because this is what Scripture and Jesus has taught us to do. God loved us even when we were enemies (Rom 5:8) and we are called to be like Him. He was merciful to us, therefore we are to be merciful to others.
 - iii. Rather give place for wrath - This is the wrath of God. We will never have to get even with someone because He will avenge as needed, those who have wronged us, either in this life or in the one to come. As such, no sin will ever go unpunished. Either they will personally pay for it in hell or Christ will take it upon Himself on the cross. Therefore we will either gain a brother/sister or they will perish in torment in the eternal fires.
 - 1. The wrath of God is a consistent theme throughout the book of Romans. 1:18 We see this in physical death or catastrophic events. The wrath of God is currently active on mankind. 2:5 The last day will be known as the day of wrath when God's wrath is unleashed in its entirety. Every sin increases the wrath that is being stored up. 2:8 His wrath will fall upon those who do not have the Spirit of Christ and do not live for God, but for themselves. And this is because they despise truth and righteousness and have given themselves to a life of unrepentant sin. 3:5 Of course, God is not unjust for punishing those who violate His laws. He would not be a holy and righteous God if He did not inflict wrath and punishment on those who deserve it. 4:15 Every proper law has a penalty and punishment for breaking the law, if there was no punishment there would be no law. In the case of God's law the punishment is death and the second death which is the eternal wrath of God without relief. 5:9 One of the primary purposes of our salvation is to be delivered from the wrath of God. 9:22 The non elect are vessels of wrath. They are objects of the wrath of God and will experience it full throttle. 12:19 The buildup Paul has described has prepared us to accept this without question. It should be obvious at this point that

- God will serve justice or mercy as He deems necessary. Let us therefore not overstep our roles and service to the Lord. 13:4-5 God has instituted governments for worldly punishment as temporary overseers in this life. They are God's ministers for our good, which is to protect us from evil. (Pro 20:22, 24:29)
2. "Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.- Taken from Duet 32:35, he uses the Old testament cross reference to prove his point. "For it is written" indicating it is still valid and applicable today just as Jesus would say "have you not read". And so though it may be obvious that not everything from the old testament law is binding on us today, God's role as judge and arbiter has never changed. Justice is ultimately enacted and fulfilled by and through Him, there is a possessiveness to this statement. He says "vengeance is mine" indicating that anyone attempting to stand in His place and enact their own form of vengeance would be stepping out of line and doing something which they ought not do.
 3. From a human perspective it might cross our minds to consider this as a negative characteristic of God. However that idea is a projection on our holy and just God. We might consider this as revenge for being wronged or a violent and passionate retaliation. But that is nothing close to the truth. Vengeance is defined as: "punishment inflicted or retribution exacted for an injury or wrong." All sin is against God and He is the only one who could truly punish fairly and accurately. Therefore vengeance is actually a good thing when God is the avenger because He cannot sin and He knows every aspect of the truth.
- iv. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; - God has His part and we have ours. Having concluded the primary reason we are not to take vengeance in our own hands, (because it belongs to God) he exhorts us once again to abide by the spirit of the old testament writings in Proverbs 25:21-22 and show love to those who have done us wrong. We can see from the context that an enemy is someone who has persecuted you or done evil to you. (V 14, 17, 21) We are not to avenge, but to give to them as they need, the same as anyone else. If food is needful we offer food, if drink then drink. Jesus teaches the very same idea in Mat 5:43-48 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you.." because that's exactly what your Father in heaven does and we are to be imitators of Him. (2 Pet 1:2-4)
- v. For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head - There are differing ideas as to the explicit meaning, however there is a general sense of transforming the heart in one way or another. It could be that it speaks of the shame an enemy might feel when good is returned for his evil deeds or that his heart will in turn melt by the display of love. That where so much love is shown, it brings about a burning conviction of his wrong. And in so doing this would be the best form of vengeance we could possibly enact because our ultimate goal is to transform hearts through the gospel. Which is why we are to pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. It is possible that our actions are a cause for repentance and change of heart, either coming to us personally or directly to God.
- vi. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good - To reaffirm everything he just said. He repeats the overall idea. Evil will come upon you in one form or another. And we are to stand against it the only way possible, by the power of God and the Holy Spirit. Do

not be overcome by evil. Do not let it have victory over you. Do not let it sit in your heart and simmer, replaying the wrongs over and over again. But give it to God as soon as it happens thinking of Jesus on the cross. Our afflictions are likely nothing compared to His, but even if they are, His example stands out. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34) When someone wrongs us, we should give it to God, for it allows us to move on and release the anger or hurt knowing God will repay as needed. But we don't stop there, we pray for those who have wronged us. And we overcome evil with good by showing them love in return. Again with Christ as our example, always doing what is excellent, noble, upright and honorable. (1 Pet 2:20-25)

72. Self test chapter 12

- a. 12:1 Why is Paul "beseeching us" to present our bodies as a living sacrifice?

- b. 12:2 What does it mean to be conformed to the world?

- c. How can we prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God?

- d. How should a Christian view themselves? in comparison to others?

- e. What is hypocritical love? Give one example:

- f. List 3 exhortations in verses 9-16 and briefly explain what they mean:

- g. When is it ok to payback evil for evil?

- h. What should we do if our attempt to reconcile or be peaceful with someone falls short?

- i. Why does vengeance belong to God?

- j. How can we overcome evil with good?

73. Review of Chapter 12: In this chapter we see a shift in focus away from the doctrine. Everything Paul has taught regarding our salvation and relation to the Jews comes down to a basic question, what now? Chapter 12 begins with an urgent “therefore” to call forth everything he has thus far communicated and call us into right and proper behavior that is befitting of Christians. If we consider all that God has done for us and the mercy He has offered, the reasonable conclusion is that it is right to give ourselves to His service in every possible way. Serving Him through the body of Christ with the very gifts He has bestowed upon us. We must put aside the common thoughts of the world and take up the mantle of living saints by transforming our minds through the word of God. Only then can we truly know the good and perfect will of God. Yet it is important to remember that knowledge without action is dead faith as James tells us in 2:17. So Paul gives us a list of short exhortations and behaviors that should be expected of sanctified Christians. Though what it all boils down to is loving one another as Christ has loved us. And in so doing, we will overcome evil just as He taught us.
74. Chapter 13 intro: It is important to remember what we are doing and what we are called to do as saints. In the previous chapter Paul opened by saying (12:2) “do not be conformed to this world”. And it seems that we can understand this simply enough for we can see the evil all around us and want nothing to do with it thanks to the new heart God has given us. But there is another side to this that can be easy to forget. That we are to be conformed to the image of Christ, in every way possible. If we are His disciples, we must understand and embrace His teaching. Chapter 13 puts forth and explains 3 broader topics that every Christian should familiarize themselves with. As Christ demonstrated and exemplified each of these. Subjection to government, fulfilling the law through love, and walking properly with the armor of light.
75. 13:1-7 The first of three lessons in this chapter is one that may grate against those who value their freedom and autonomy. However, it is important to remember that while God has given us liberty, He has also given us a law. And though we have been freed from the consequences of the law, we readily acknowledge that it still exists. The moral law has been reemphasized in the New Testament, while many principles of the Old testament law have been codified by governments around the world. And while governments may be obtrusive at times, they serve a purpose as God’s instruments of justice and are ultimately here for our benefit. So Paul gives us multiple reasons why we are to subject ourselves willingly to their authority.
- a. (V1) Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities - This means everyone, no matter what title or office a person may hold, whether civil servant or officer of the church. No one is to place themselves above the law. However, it is important to acknowledge that all governments are not the same and the structure of each varies. A king may have exclusive autonomy and the right to execute justice by his own determining apart from any written laws. Whereas a representative government may be held to strict guidelines and limits of power. We are not called to obey only one form of government over the other, but to obey and subject ourselves to the governing authorities in general, no matter which form it is.

- i. Some things to keep in mind. This is not to say that our conscience should be subject to the will of men. For we know that men are fallible. Our conscience must always and only be subject to the will of God as we see of Peter and John before the sanhedrin in acts chapter 4:18-21. And while we have them as our example of proper disobedience, it is important for the sake of our conscience as well as for the spread of the gospel that we are certain our actions are in alignment with the will of God. Peter and John had glorified God through their actions, therefore let us do the same.
 - ii. Another thing to note is the manner in which he writes this. "Let every soul be subject". Implying it is to be voluntary. And we can see why with the second part of the verse. For there is no authority except from God. (1 Pet 2:13-17) It isn't just for our own good, but for the Lord's sake like everything else. He has instituted the authorities for a purpose. And our subjection to them represents our willingness to do good. Therefore our enemies will have nothing to say against us. But we should regularly examine ourselves in this regard. Are we obeying the authorities? Is it begrudgingly? Are we bitter about God's choices for governance? Ecc 10:20 "Do not curse the king, even in your thought" and Peter tells us to honor the king. Which means we must show them due respect, whether speaking to them or about them and their decisions. Why...?
 - iii. There is no authority except from God - When speaking to Pilate Jesus said much the same thing "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above." (John 19:11) It is important to remember that God is sovereign in all things. Nothing happens in this world outside of His knowledge and assent, not even a bird falling to the ground. (Mat 10:29) He either commands a thing to happen or He allows it, but nothing happens without His permission. Even when we perceive an evil, there is a reason behind it. Joseph in Egypt is a great example. What his brothers meant for evil, God meant for good. Even though the Israelites became slaves, this was also part of His masterful plan. All authorities (consider Pharaoh Rom 9:17) that exist are appointed by God and this is just another reason why we should obey them.
- b. (V2) Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God - On the surface it is as simple as that. Unless there is an unlawful contradiction with the word of God, we are to obey the governing authorities as though we are obeying God Himself. And this is because it was God who installed these authorities for His own purposes. Therefore to rebel against the governors or authority in general is to rebel against God.
- i. and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves - (Rom 2:5-11) To disobey God is to incur wrath. We cannot escape this reality no matter how hard we try to ignore it. As children of God we naturally want to imitate our father, but children of the devil want to do the same thing. They want to shirk the yoke of God every way they can, whether in their hearts or outwardly expressed in the world. But you cannot disobey God without consequence in one form or another.
- c. (V3-4) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil - One of the primary purposes of government is for the safety and goodness of the people governed. And part of this responsibility is preventing evildoers from causing harm and injury in the first place. To structure society in such a way as to limit the desire for crime, but also to put the fear of

God into them through immediate and temporal punishments. Thus even in Christian nations, it is not against the will of God to have a penal system and a severe one at that.

- d. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good - (1 Pet 3:10-12) There is great comfort in knowing the peace of God. But this is only possible with a clean conscience. In a proper setting, the righteous need not fear the long arm of the law as it is only designed to punish those who have no regard for what is good and will do as they please despite the harm or injury it causes others. Yet in addition to the freedom of fear, there is a praise that comes along with being an upstanding citizen. From the governing authorities, “for he is God’s minister to you for good” (V4) as well as from God. “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous”. The government is for our benefit and when functioning properly there is nothing to fear for those who seek to please the Lord.
 - i. There is an unfortunate aspect of human nature that corrupts even what is good. To such a degree that evil may be overlooked or even praised while goodness and truth are punished. And there really isn’t much to say about this other than to ask ourselves “what are we to do in this situation?” Paul just told us to overcome evil with good (12:21). Jesus said do not resist an evil person, but to love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (Mat 5:39-44) We have been consistently warned about suffering persecution, so we ask again, what will we do in this situation? (Mat 5:10-12, Rom 5:3, 1 Pet 3:13-17) We are called to live righteously no matter what is going on in the world or who is in a position of authority for God is our comfort and hope. But should we suffer for Christ or for righteousness sake, Jesus tells us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad.
- e. But if you do evil, be afraid - Assuming that we are dealing with a properly functioning government, there should be a healthy fear in the minds of those who would violate the laws of the land. One of the most basic roles of the government is to bear the sword of justice and punish evil in such a way as to deter and prevent future evil from happening again. He says they do not bear the sword in vain because it is not an empty threat. Evil must be punished and it is a government’s lawful mandate to do so for the safety and protection of it’s people and for the continuity of the nation. God has instituted manmade governments as ministers of wrath on those who practice evil.
 - i. Governments as God’s ministers - Here we see mentioned twice that the authorities are functioning as God’s ministers. Which means they will be held accountable in the discharge of their duties. However, they are still agents of God and are serving His greater purposes whether they act in accordance with His expressed will or not. When properly respectful of God, they are ministers of the righteous for good and avengers to execute wrath on those who practice evil. Public justice may be their primary function, but this takes on different forms. Arbitration of quarrels and disagreements, determining proper recourse for damages, punishing the guilty, protecting innocent lives and preserving peace and order. As they do these things, they are in alignment with God. Though we should expect to see failure and imperfection as this is man’s plight.
- f. (V5) Therefore you must be subject - Paul now sums up our responsibility to subject ourselves to government with two reasons. Not only because of the constant threat of wrath, but also for conscience's sake. Regarding wrath, everyone who steps out of line and

challenges the authorities through rebellious action risks everything they hold dear including their life. While minor infractions (overgrown lawn, speeding) might have a simple fine to pay, serious crimes come with the penalty of death (treason, rape, murder). Christians should never be involved with the latter, but even the minor infractions should be held in high esteem for conscience's sake. As it is not only the authorities who act as God's ministers, but every Christian serves as an ambassador for Christ. (2 Cor 5:20) And we know firsthand that to stumble in one point of the law is to be guilty of all (James 2:10) Therefore for the sake of our conscience we should make every effort to be like Christ and fulfill all righteousness no matter how trivial it may seem to us. We can and should consider this part of our reasonable service to the Lord and humble ourselves to view the situation as those governed by the appointed authorities of God. And let us not give the world any reason to discredit our Savior.

- g. (V6) Because of this you also pay taxes - Because we consent to this governance, and hold it as our own. It is our responsibility to maintain it and provide for its sustenance. The government is for the communal good of all and there are many advantages and benefits that are made possible through this authority. And when acting in its highest capacity it is serving God to protect the people and maintain the peace. Therefore we pay tax not as charity, but as a debt that is owed or as an investment into future blessings. And just as preachers of the gospel have a right to earn a living from the gospel (1 Cor 9:13-14) so too does the public servant, also acting as God's minister, have a right to earn their living from the work they do. And a tiresome, often thankless work at that. We cannot neglect this aspect of government maintenance.
- h. (V7) Render therefore to all their due - Jesus again told us the same. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mark 12:17) Give to everyone what is rightfully owed to them. This is justice: "the principle or ideal of just dealing or right action". It is right and proper to pay those who work for you. But this goes beyond just paying taxes. "Render therefore to **all** their due." This starts with God and moves down the line through ourselves and outward towards others. This requires consideration and forethought. But here he specifically mentions those things that pertain to governing authorities. Taxes, as was already addressed, can cover a variety of fees imposed by the authorities to pay for certain features and functions. It could be a flat rate recurring payment owed by every citizen, or it could be a fee imposed on the sale of goods or services. Customs may fall under this broader category of tax as well, wherein it is the imposition of duties, tolls or levies by the sovereign law of a country on imports or exports. He then mentions fear and honor, both of which we ought to give liberally to whom it belongs as a sign of respect. This reaches beyond the government to all authority in our lives. Beginning with God and our parents. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" and "Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father." (Pro 9:10, Lev 19:3) But it doesn't stop there. We owe this respect to everyone in positions of authority; to teachers, policemen, judges, coaches, elders and officers of the church. And if there is any question as to who we ought to pay this respect and honor, let us err on the side of caution and humble ourselves as servants to our neighbors.

76. 13:8-10 Building off the previous section, Paul moves beyond the scope of government to speak on the overarching law that should govern everything we do; Love for others. And of course love for God must hold the topmost position in our hearts, but we cannot properly love God without also loving His creation. And as we render to all their due, let us not neglect to love them as we ought.

- a. (V8) Owe no one anything except to love - This is part of what he just mentioned in V7, "Render therefore to all their due". As Christians, we have an obligation to love others and to see others as deserving of love. Why? Because that's what our heavenly Father does. That's what Christ has done and that's what the law calls for. We are learning to walk in His footsteps and He has given us the ability to do so where previously we were incapable of such. "for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" Fulfilling the law was not possible before God intervened in our life, but now we have the opportunity to do what is proper and right and love everyone the way they deserve to be loved. The way we are called to love.
- b. (V9) The commandments are summed up in this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". True love considers the well being of others as though it were ourselves. Husbands and wives as well as parents may know this better than others, for the simple fact that self sacrifice is often required in these relationships and we see our spouse and children as part of ourselves. Sacrifice is a price that we are willing to pay for those we love. But this is the way we are to view everyone. The idea being that we would not violate any commandment if we were always acting out of love. Jesus said "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Mat 7:12) We certainly wouldn't want anyone to murder us or steal from us, therefore we ought not do it to them. It is a simple and effective method for determining proper course of action. If we care about others as much as we care about ourselves, we would not be able to ignore those in need, nor would we be able to treat them poorly.
- c. (V10) Love does no harm to a neighbor therefore love is the fulfillment of the law - The summary of the whole law, yet while this is true, it is important to understand that the law is not fulfilled simply by doing no harm to a neighbor because God knows the intentions of hearts. Scheming to get an upper hand by acting nice to everyone is hypocritical to say the least. However, real love does not even imagine any evil towards others. From the sermon on the mount (Mat 5:22) Jesus expressed that even anger towards your brother without a cause is equivalent to murder. Adultery in the heart is similar. (Mat 5:28) Therefore love is required within and without in order to fulfill the law. Rendering to everyone their due, let us love one another.

77. 13:11-14 The chapter ends with a more urgent exhortation. Now is the time to act, the old has passed away and the new is here. Put off the former way of life and put on the armor of God. Be vigilant and watchful expecting the return of Christ.

- a. (V11) And *do* this, knowing the time - It is time to awake out of sleep. It is time to present our bodies as living sacrifices and transform our minds. 1 Cor 15:34 The former life of sin which is spiritual darkness has passed on. "For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles"(1 Pet 4:3) It is time to put that aside and live up to our calling for we have seen the light, we have asked for it and now we walk in the light. Eph 5:8-14 Not only this, but we were darkness, we ate, slept and breathed darkness, but now

we are light in Christ as children of the light. Therefore we should have no fellowship with darkness at all, but rather expose the unfruitful works of darkness as the light does. But he says "knowing the time", as in we should be well aware of all that is going on and what is being asked of us. (Mat 16:3) We should understand our place in the biblical timeline as we know things are expected to get worse (Rom 8:22) and we can see the evil spreading around us. We also know that God is expecting more from us now than He did before Christ came and gave His light to the world. (Acts 17:30)

- b. For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed - This is our ultimate salvation, future glorification when Jesus returns and we are united with Him. Every day that dawns brings us one day closer to His return. "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." (1 Pet 4:7) On one hand we need to take things more seriously because we never know when Christ will return. But we do know it is one day closer than yesterday and the time will run out. Therefore we need to be more proactive in our ministry to share the gospel with those lost in sin. And another thing, is that as we move closer to our ultimate goal, there should be more of an excitement than when we first began because we know it's getting closer. But oftentimes we see people growing complacent forgetting that Christ will come as a thief in the night. (1 Thess 5:1-6,8) Yet now is the time to awake.
- c. (V12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand - This is a metaphor speaking of the present darkness of this age. We are living in evil times and everyday is getting worse. Despite pockets of hope and glimmers of light that bring salvation to people and glory to God, the overall theme of this world has been growing darker. In a similar manner of leadup as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or the flood. And Jesus referred to the flood when speaking of the tribulation and rapture. "Of that day and hour no one knows...But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Mat 24:36-39) And we know that the flood occurred because of the prolific evil that abounded. (Gen 6:5) All we have to do is look around, turn on the news and open our eyes to the reality around us to know things are getting worse. Even in our own lifetime this is evident as we can see in the systems of education, entertainment and also in the church itself. (James 5:7-9) But we know that Christ is coming and need to be eagerly awaiting His coming. (Phi 3:20)
- d. Therefore cast off the darkness and put on the armor of light - A metaphor with the imagery of clothing. As we discussed in the previous chapter, knowledge without action is dead faith. If we know what is coming yet fail to prepare as best we can, we can only expect the worst. We have been warned over and over, the time is at hand. "The judge is standing at the door". We cannot afford to dabble in sin and live as we once did, but must live a life of repentance and constantly seek the light. (Eph 4:17-24) If we have been redeemed by Christ, we are no longer in the dark and must renounce every speck of darkness from within us while seeking the righteousness of God. We must put on the armor of light; "the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." It's something we actively need to do. God has given us this ability, now we must use it and make use of it.
- e. (V13) Let us walk properly as in the day, not in revelry.. - Another metaphor with the imagery of walking. (Eph 4:1) "I... beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were

called.” To walk properly is to walk upright, honestly and righteously. Having “regard for good things in the sight of all men.” (Rom 12:17) ([Phi 2:14-15](#)) We are to shine in the world as bright lights. Beacons that glorify God by our good works and draw others to Christ. (Mat 5:16) We are not to walk as the rest of the world, to be “conformed to this world” walking in revelry and drunkenness, lewdness and lust, strife and anger. We have peace and joy. We have hope and life. We don’t need to live that life of sin anymore. (1 Pet 4:3) “we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.” It doesn’t matter if the world thinks we are strange for not participating, we are children of God and are called to follow His Son, in all righteousness, bearing fruit and walking worthy of the Lord. Which is why the final exhortation is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

- f. (V14) Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh - Just as we are to put on the armor of light and put on the new man, even more important than both of these, we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. ([Gal 3:26-27](#)) Every believer has already put on Christ, but the imagery here is that we must do this continually and put Him on more and more each day by growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. (Through prayer, worship, fellowship, reading of Scripture etc) “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30) We are active participants in our sanctification. And if we are walking properly in Christ, our progress should look like a slow and steady climb up a mountain. Leaving the world behind and making our way towards heaven. But as we look back towards the world, we inevitably slow down, stumble or even come to a halt in our Christian walk. So he says that we are not to make any provision for the flesh. Which means we are to be deliberate in our actions. Planning wisely to avoid any circumstance which might put us in a place of temptation. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. 1 John 2:15 “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” Therefore consider how you may further put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

78. Chapter 13 self test

- a. Why must we subject ourselves to the authorities/government?
- b. Should we fear the government?
- c. How should we view governmental authorities?
- d. Give a better reason than fear to obey the government.
- e. In regards to paying taxes, Jesus said the sons of the king are free from paying (Mat 17:26), does this apply to Christians since Jesus is our king?
- f. If we are to owe no one anything, but love, should Christians obtain loans or mortgages?
- g. What is the main idea of verse 8? What is he really saying?

h. How is love the fulfillment of the law?

i. How does Paul say we can sum up the commandments?

j. V 11 What does Paul mean when he says “now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep”?

79. Review of Chapter 13: Beginning in Chapter 12, Paul began to lay out for us the practical side of our faith. What does it look like to live everyday as Christian? Quite simply, It is sacrifice and holiness just as Christ demonstrated to us. We are not to be like the world, but must transform ourselves through the renewing of our minds. Of course this isn't possible without the Holy Spirit, but we must actively choose to participate in the process. We must submit ourselves to the teaching of Christ and Scripture in order to be conformed to Christ and use our gifts the way that God has intended for us. So Paul gives us a list of behaviors and attitudes we should do our best to understand and exemplify to our holy family as well as the world.

Chapter 13 picks up on the same themes. How are we to live as a Christian? He opens by teaching us that we are not to be rebellious, but submissive to authorities. For God has appointed this authority and given them to us for our benefit. “Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God” (V2). But we need not be afraid of the authorities if we only do good and live as a Christian should live, fulfilling the law that Christ has set before us. To “love your neighbor as yourself” for the spirit of the law is to love, and love does no harm to a neighbor.

And finally, we should be considering all of this with a sense of urgency. Salvation is nearer today than it was yesterday and we are one day further away from the old life of sin we use to walk in. Therefore we should turn away entirely from that old way of life and look to the cross, look to that glorious day when Christ will return. Put on the armor of light and walk properly, as is fitting for one who has been born again. And put on the Lord Jesus Christ, denying the lusts of your flesh.

80. Chapter 14 intro: In further exhortation and instruction for practical living, this time specifically in the church, Paul now moves on to religious liberties. He addresses two things in particular that were likely causing contention between the Jews and Gentiles. The observance of special days and eating meat that some might deem as unclean. He ultimately addresses the situation by saying that Christians belong to God and it is God who will judge them. If a brother or sister is weak in the faith, and doesn't fully understand the liberty we have in Christ, we should receive them in this weakness and not cause them to grieve over ours. For we should pursue peace and not contention lest we attempt to destroy the work of God for the sake of food.

81. 14:1-13 He starts off addressing the situation with food. Though the argument holds similar to special days to which he promptly proceeds. The general sense being that we shouldn't turn away or neglect those who do not understand the liberty we have in Christ. Nor should those who hold strict observances judge those who do not. The guiding principle in this matter being

our own conscience, therefore everyone will undoubtedly have differing ideas and limitations. But in the end everyone of us will give an account for our actions or lack thereof.

- a. (V1-2) Receive one who is weak in the faith - Do not turn them away or hinder them from partaking in the fellowship, but receive them as brothers. In regards to their weakness, he explains this in verse 2, "he who is weak eats only vegetables". However this could and does apply to a great many things. The point to follow is that there are certain things/activities that are not morally wrong in themselves and we should not make such a big deal about them as to exclude those who hold differing opinions. Can you think of any others?
- b. *but* not to disputes over doubtful things - That is, we should receive them, but not to argue about their choices and beliefs. Not to convince them they are wrong and attempt to change their mind. But to show that the love of Christ abides in all believers. (Rom 15:1, Phi 3:15-16, Tit 3:9-11)
- c. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables - The reason that he who eats only vegetables is weak is because he doesn't fully understand or perhaps trust that Christ has truly abolished the ceremonial laws. At the time of writing, this was almost exclusively referring to the believing Jew who had been instructed in the Mosaic laws. Exo 34:15 specifically mentions eating meat sacrificed to idols. We should not partake in such activities and Paul clarifies this for us in 1 Cor 10:18 "Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" And this was likely the cause of weakness in the Jews as they were uncertain if the meat sold in the markets had been sacrificed to idols or if the animals were being slaughtered according to their laws. (This could just as easily apply today when there are converts from various religions or cultures)
- d. (V3-4) Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat - The apostle holds both sides accountable and counsels the situation with brotherly love. Notice that the admonitions are different for each group. Those who eat, who observe their Christian liberty with gladness and freedom from strict rule of law, (primarily gentiles at this time), are not to look down on the others with contempt and disdain as though they are not good enough Christians for their lack of understanding. Neither are they to ridicule and mock them for their overly burdensome rules. And on the other side, those who do not eat must refrain from judging the one who does. There should be no censure or limits enforced on all for the sake of personal beliefs for we have no right to judge another in this manner. Where Scripture does not expressly condemn such behavior, there is no benefit to gain from quarrel. (While the old testament did teach the Jews to refrain from certain foods, the apostles, under the authority of Christ, expressed a new teaching and understanding. I.e. that Christ fulfilled the law and that no animal was unclean in itself for "the earth *is* the Lord's, and all its fullness.")
- e. For God has received him - Christians are generally permitted into fellowship as brothers or sisters based upon public declaration of faith in Christ. For "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor 12:3) In those days, baptism was also more prevalent and likely used as a barometer in this regard. But for this reason in particular we have no right to deny the love of Christ to our fellow saints; God has received him. And if God has received him, who are we to deny him or judge him?

- f. To his own master he stands or falls - Who are you to judge? Directed towards the weaker brother who refrains from eating, though equally applicable to all, there is no right conferred to any person outside of Christ that they may judge the saints. For it is Christ who will judge all. When one serves a master, it is his master's bidding he must worry about and not the thoughts of other men. Even more so when his master Jesus Christ. "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)
- g. Indeed he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand - This is only applicable to the true believer. Under normal circumstances, a servant might fall due to any variety of reasons, but in regards to Christianity, whether in error or not, God is able to make all believers "stand" and will make all believers stand come the day of judgment. For we have the blood of Christ to wash us clean and it is His robe of righteousness that we will wear.
- h. (V5-6) One person esteems special days, another esteems every day alike - (Col 2:16-17) The matter at hand is regarding all the Jewish customary feasts and festivals. Whether the Jews attempted to impose these on the Gentiles is not mentioned, however it is made clear that there should be no imposition of such days on those who are not drawn to observe them. The special feasts were originally intended to differentiate the Jews as a separate and distinct people. However the Gentiles had no such attachment to them and as we are no longer confined under the law, there is no need to observe them if our conscience has freed us from the obligation. And this is the deciding factor, our conscience. The degree to which it is permissible or forbidden is the degree to which we are fully convinced either way. The reason being that we do not want to carelessly offend God. Therefore determine the matter with reasoning and exercise the utility of your conscience.
- i. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord - And he who eats, eats to the Lord. The same is true for those who do not partake in special days or certain meats. Whatever stance we take, so long as the purpose behind it is for the glory of God, then the matter is settled. To acknowledge God in humility and gratitude is the appropriate attitude. Whether we are observing special days because we think we ought to, or refraining from eating because we ought not, let it be done for God's glory giving thanks always.
- j. (V7-8) None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself - "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;" (Gal 2:20) The idea here is that true Christians do not make a practice out of self centered living. That is what the world does. But everything we do is or should be directed to the glory of our savior. For He is our master and we are His servants. (we are slaves to righteousness 6:16-18) And He has set about us a task of godly living; to love one another and spread His gospel to those who walk in the dark. Thus, we give our entire lives to Him, for this purpose. And whatever He has set in store for us, we belong to Him. And we trust His ways above our own. Which means, whether we continue on until we die in the grace of old age or through murderous persecution as so many have, we will die to Him, for we know it is according to His timing and His plan. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." (Job 13:15)
- k. (V9) For to this end Christ died...that He might be Lord of both the dead and living - (1 Thess 5:9-10) He is explaining that this is one of the main purposes for Christ's death and resurrection. To secure His place on the throne of His Father and receive all authority in heaven and earth. (Mat 28:18, Phi 2:5-11) To which He would rule over every creature both

the living and the dead. And one thing we can take note and comfort in, is that which Christ Himself also has pointed out in Mat 22:32. That the “dead” are still alive. For “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” When we die, the body goes into the grave awaiting resurrection, but the spirit goes to be with the Lord. (2 Cor 5:6-8, Phi 1:21-24)

- l. (V10-11) But why do you judge or show contempt? - Why should we believe we have any right to condemn, restrict or censor another Christian? Or why should we think it is reasonably acceptable to mock and ridicule fellow believers who adhere to a more strict set of religious practices? As he has already mentioned, in both situations God is glorified. On one hand, we are able to praise God for the freedom we receive in Christ. And on the hand, we honor God through daily discipline aimed towards His praise. And if the disputed matter at hand is only regarding special days and the food we eat, let us resolve to praise God and praise Jesus understanding that we all make mistakes one way or another, and pray for the understanding we need to resolve the situation peacefully. Furthermore, to actively cause dissension is contrary to the goals of Christianity. We should be coming together in unity, not arguing over little things. “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.” (Rom 16:17)
- m. For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ - Yet here is another more potent reason to leave the judging and contempt to someone else. Because Christ is the judge and we will all stand before Him to give account of our words and actions. “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Mat 7:1-2) We must use the discernment of the Holy Spirit within us to judge righteously. If those present all profess belief in Christ and no one is openly engaging in sin, leave the secondary matters aside. There is nothing wrong in discussing these issues, but if the matter drives us to sin through anger or insult, the situation is best left alone, “for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” (Mat 12:36)
- n. “As I live says the Lord” - This quote is a paraphrase from Isaiah 45:23. As we can see from the original text the speaker is God, creator of heaven and earth (45:18). And Paul uses this Scripture in reference to Jesus. For as we know Jesus is the Lord God, but for those who claim it doesn't say so in Scripture, here is another indirect proof.... The phrase “As I live” was often used as an oath, otherwise expressed as “I have sworn by myself” i.e “so long as I live, such and such will surely happen.” Knowing that God lives forever, the meaning is clear to say that no one will escape this fate.
- o. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess - ([Phi 2:9-11](#)) The same is expressed in Philipians 2. Jesus Crist is Lord of all. The meaning of this statement is simply that everyone will acknowledge Him as God and give Him all due honor and respect. And while this is true of all men everywhere, Paul is using it to bring the readers (Gentile and Jew) into a greater perspective. We don't need to argue over these trivial things as we will all stand before God and give an account of our actions.
- p. (V12-13) So then each of us will give an account of himself to God - He finalizes the argument and begins to exhort us in what is a more practical practice for true Christians. (Don't do this...but do this instead) The bottom line is that we belong to Christ and there is

nothing that should cause us to forget this or forsake the great mercy which He has shown to us or neglect to extend this grace to others. Of course there will be times to speak against sin and correct a brother, but if that sin is not obvious, and both parties genuinely disagree, let it be; knowing that we must explain ourselves to Christ who knows the secrets of hearts. (2 Cor 5:10) And one last thing to keep in mind here: (Mat 6:14-15) We can be convinced of how right we are, but there is always room for error. For “we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know.” (1 Cor 8:1-2) If we are so hard that we refuse to have leniency on others, not knowing which of us is actually right, why would God have such leniency on us? (Mat 18:35)

- q. But rather resolve this - Do not put a stumbling block or cause to fall in our brothers way. If there must be judgment at all, let it be upon yourself to determine whether your actions are tempting your brother to sin and act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Even if you believe you are right. Even if you are right, to deliberately or carelessly tempt someone into what they believe is sin goes against the principle to love your neighbor as yourself. If they believe it is sin and you provoke them into doing it anyway, they will be more likely to ignore their conscience next time as well. (1 Cor 8:4-13 , 10:23-24, 27-30)

82. 14:14-23 Once again the law of love which he addressed in the previous chapter comes to the front of his thought. If the things we do, though they are lawful, cause our brother to stumble and sin, there is nothing loving about that. Do not let yourself be caught up in your freedom. Freedom is good, it is a blessing and gift of Christ, yet even this is not to be used for our own pleasure, but for the praise and glory of God. Therefore to abuse this freedom is sin.

- a. (V14) I know there is nothing unclean of itself - Paul recognizes himself as part of the group which may eat all things. He also says he knows, which may indicate special revelation from God or simply just a thorough understanding of Scripture and the abolishment of ceremonial laws. For we know the Jewish people did have specific ordinances against eating particular foods, however this was not the original plan as God gave Noah all animals to eat as food. (Gen 9:3-4) The only prohibition in regards to eating animals at the time of Noah, was to refrain from eating them while they still had life in them. To refrain from eating the flesh while it still had blood in it. (Lev 17:11) “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”
- b. but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean. - There is an important lesson here to observe and esteem our conscience with great respect. Back in chapter 2:14-16 he mentions that even the Gentiles who do not have the law will be judged by their own thoughts in the day of judgment. To put it simply, it is a sin to act contrary to our conscience. Why? He spells it out for us in verse 23: “he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does* not eat from faith; for whatever *is* not from faith is sin.” If our lives are dedicated to the glory of God, why should we act in a manner contrary to what our hearts believe is right and true? If we believe it is a sin to act in this manner, yet do it anyway, there is no difference than a true violation of His law. For you are deliberately choosing to act in opposition to Him; choosing evil, (though it be only in your mind). and that is a violation of the 1st and greatest commandment. (Titus 1:15-16)

- c. (V15) Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food - (1 Cor 10:23-24) Just because your conscience gives you a green light to do something, does not mean we always should. It is not a sin to refrain from doing something we are permitted to do. It is a sin to do something we believe we ought not do. Therefore if your actions are causing heartache to someone else, in this case a fellow Christian, there is no longer any love on display. The grieving can take different forms. It could be the heartache mentioned, from watching someone you love partake in (perceived) sin. Or it could be that you influence someone to act in opposition to their own conscience. But in either case, the law of love is violated if you know that such would occur and choose to act anyway.
- d. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. - Do not cause another to sin and bring condemnation upon himself; do not provoke him to anger or apostasy through your actions. Do not be the cause of a weaker brother to act contrary to his conscience...through pressure or lack of true understanding as he watches you partake in what he believes is sin. Do not be the cause of a setback or stumble off the narrow path. It is true that a sincere Christian cannot lose his salvation. (Rom 8:29-30, 38-39) But there are still consequences to our sin and we do not want to be pointed to as the cause for our brother's fall. In addition to this, we don't know who is truly saved as there are many professing Christians who do not truly believe and there is no reason to test their salvation for the sake of our own comfort. Which would put a different emphasis on the term destroy.
- e. (V16) Therefore do not let your good deeds be spoken of as evil - (1 Pet 2:11-12) A general rule of thumb would be to reconsider any good deed that might be seen or spoken of as evil. Not that we should always refrain, but we should be wise to the way the world and fellow Christians perceive things. (1 Thess 5:22 "Abstain from every form of evil") Especially in view of the previous verse. The "good" that Paul speaks of would be the liberty we have received through Christ. The eating of meats and observances of special days. We are no longer limited and or obligated to participate in these ceremonial laws, but there is no reason to deliberately offend others if we know they have an issue with such things. The love of Christ is sacrificial and that is what we have inherited. Therefore we also should be conscious to sacrifice as needed, those things we have liberty to do, yet will bring no good to ourselves or others. (Rom 15:2) "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Cor 6:12) Another consideration is how the world perceives Christianity as a whole. They see the divisions and denominations and use this as a reason to discard all of it. "If the church can't agree with itself...why should I?" How many needless arguments within the church have been caused over trivial things? Dress codes, music choices, eating meat on Friday or drinking alcohol. Little things, so long as they are little, should be carried on our shoulders as trivial burdens nailed to our personal cross.
- f. (V17) For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace - Our salvation, while individually experienced and enjoyed, is not primarily for our benefit, but for God Himself. For His glory and that of His Son. However we do receive the benefits of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. These are gifts of the Spirit. By righteousness, we aren't talking about the imputed righteousness given to us by Christ, but that new desire for righteousness in our hearts. Our willingness to submit ourselves to the laws of God for His sake as well ours and our neighbors, knowing that it is for the benefit

and goodwill of all. And it is this submission that produces peace and joy within us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is not profitable to anyone, including yourself, to eat and drink (although lawful) if it produces strife and contention within the body of Christ. We didn't come to Christ for the liberty to eat, but to become children of God and grow in holiness.

- g. (V18) For he who serves Christ in these things *is* acceptable to God and approved by men. - It is easy to see why men would approve this behavior. If we are able to adapt ourselves to their likings and peculiarities so as not to offend them, what cause could there be to receive offense? The only cause that remains which might offend them is the truth for which Christ died. That they are sinners in need of a savior. And this will happen no matter what we do. Thus the more important issue for us to consider is that we are acceptable to God. And here it is said that we are acceptable to God by serving Christ in this manner. By giving of ourselves sacrificially, by refraining from things we are permitted to do if it will cause offense to others, by living for the righteousness, joy and peace offered through the Holy Spirit. Ultimately by obeying Christ as His disciples. See Rom 16:17-18 for the alternative view. (Mat 7:21, Rom 2:13, James 1:22)
- h. (V19-20) Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace - (1 Cor 10:31-33) As straightforward as it can be, considering everything he just covered, let us not be the cause of division, but strive to make peace for the benefit of all and for edification which is instruction or teaching. We cannot teach or instruct if there is no common ground and many if not most will turn a deaf ear to the one they believe is deliberately causing offense. All things should be done with the glory of God and the benefit of others in mind.
- i. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food... - (1 Cor 8:8-13) To emphasize the importance, Paul repeats and rephrases what he just said in verse 15. There is nothing so special about food, whether we eat or don't eat that will give us favor with God. However, "if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no longer walking in love." We may "destroy" the work of God by becoming a stumbling block or tearing down what faith they may have. It takes a lifetime to understand and build the Christian character. And for those who are new to the faith or who lack understanding, the foundation is not secure. Therefore we tread lightly where needed and abstain from eating if required.
- j. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense. - Compare vs 14 "but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean". While an action may not be objectively evil, the intent of the heart can make it so. Though Paul agrees and considers all things pure in themselves, it would be evil to do anything with the forethought of knowledge to deliberately cause offense. If we know our brothers will stumble and be offended by our actions, yet do them anyway, there is no love or charity in this, and thus we violate the commandment to love.
- k. (V21) *It is* good to refrain from all things that cause a brother to stumble - Whether this means food or wine or wearing a football jersey... If such things cause a brother to stumble or be made weak, it is profitable to refrain. It doesn't matter what liberty you desire to exercise as our lives have been given to Christ, to be used by Him as servants for His purposes. Therefore whatever serves His purpose the greatest is what we ought to do and be happy for it, not even considering what we are giving up for His sake. If our actions are profitable to the body of Christ because we do not eat pork or drink wine, we should

consider these as trivial things where others have given so much more. It's not that we can't enjoy these liberties, but there is a time and place for them. And where a brother is offended or made weak, such is not the time or place. If we cannot bring peace and joy into the church of God, how should the church of God offer peace and joy to the world?

- l. (V22) Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. - In other words, do you have the kind of faith that frees you from the law and gives you liberty in Christ? That is great, but let this be between you and God and do not display this liberty obnoxiously or ostentatiously in public before the eyes of weaker brethren where it might cause harm. Once again, this does not mean we must refrain from anything in particular, but it does give us reason to be thoroughly considerate of our actions.
- m. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves - It is a great and wonderful thing to be given this freedom in Christ. And happy is the man, so long as his heart and mind no longer condemn him, who has received this liberty where it was once forbidden. But to be careful, we must not exceed the bounds of this liberty. We do not have liberty to offend another. Therefore it is entirely possible to condemn ourselves through a legitimate use of liberty which is why he says "have it to yourself before God." What good is having liberty if said liberty is the means of our condemnation? Which gives another viewpoint and reason to exercise grace towards others as well.
- n. (V23) But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith- The scales of balance are tipped in favor of our conscience when it comes to matters of faith and liberty. If everyone else is eating and drinking, and we don't fully understand, but believe it is wrong, we must refrain. For our conscience will be weighed against our decisions. (Rom 2:15) This applies to everything in our lives. If it is sinless to refrain but questionable to partake, the decision should be directed to caution until such time that we are certain of the matter. It is also important to note that this only pertains to such things that are not expressly forbidden in Scripture. (Acts 15:19 lists a few)
- o. For whatever is not from faith is sin - Keeping in mind the general context of what has proceeded, the matter at hand is a question of liberty. The way we choose to act knowing that we have died to the law. In such matters where it is questionable, we must always rely on our faith and a clear conscience to make the appropriate decisions. To do anything less; to act without consideration of faith and conscience in these instances, or to act against faith and conscience altogether, is always a sin.

83. Chapter 14 self test

- a. In the context of this chapter, who are the weaker brethren?
- b. (V2) Why is the one who eats *only* vegetables weak?
- c. (V3) How does Paul admonish the weaker brethren? How the stronger brethren?

- d. (V5-13) If a fellow Christian believes your actions are sinful and informs you of this, but the Bible doesn't expressly say so, how should you determine the matter?
- e. In the same scenario, how should you act around this Christian if you believe he is wrong?
- f. (V14) If nothing is unclean of itself, is Paul contradicting himself to say otherwise?
- g. What are some of the consequences/implications for ignoring a weaker brother and choosing to partake of things he is offended by?
- h. (V17-20) Whereas "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." What should we pursue instead of food and drink?
- i. (V22) How can you have faith to yourself before God? What does this mean?
- j. Why is he who doubts condemned if he eats?

84. Chapter 14 review: Continuing with the practical applications of our faith, Paul addresses those situations that are not always clear. How do we act and what do we do when Scripture doesn't specifically tell us and there are disagreements among Christians? Using the examples of food and special days, he helps us understand that what is truly important is unity and love rather than being right. When it comes to doubtful things, there is no right or wrong answer, but each individual must rely on his faith and conscience to determine the matter for himself. These things shouldn't be a cause of separation or strife, but a practice in understanding the views of others from a desire to care for them. Every true Christian is a servant of Christ, and it is to Christ we shall answer. Therefore we shouldn't suppress the liberty of others and neither should we look down on or despise those who are weak in the faith.

When Scripture doesn't expressly forbid an action, we are free to make determinations based upon our conscience, however there should be certainty in our minds; we should be fully convinced that what we are doing is within the liberty of Christ, giving thanks to God for whatever it is. And should a brother be offended by our liberty, it is best to avoid doing whatever it is publicly for the sake of the weaker brother as we do not want to put a stumbling block before them and cause them to act against their own conscience. Ultimately, our actions should be based upon love. There should be no point where we willfully choose to offend

another brother for the sake of our own pleasure, for once this happens there is no longer any love present. Enjoy your liberty in Christ before God, but not at the sake or cost of a brother.

85. Chapter 15 intro: The beginning of the chapter is much of a continuation and conclusion to the previous one. He speaks to the need for unity between the weaker and stronger brethren. Not for our own sake, but for the sake of others. Just as Christ did not come to please Himself, we are not here to please ourselves, but to glorify God by serving others. Therefore we must receive one another and bear with each other's burdens. He counsels the Gentiles once more that Jesus came as a servant to the circumcision for multiple reasons. And leaves them with various prayers. The latter portion of the chapter accounts for his plans and desires to come see the roman saints.
86. 15:1-6 From the opening verse we can see the obvious connection to the preceding chapter, however the focus has shifted away from the use of our liberty towards once again serving each other as exemplified by Christ. Bearing the burdens of those who are weaker for their sake, that they may be lifted up on the shoulders of those who are stronger.
- a. (V1-2) He leaves us with 2 general rules to govern ourselves using strong language to say that we "ought" to act this way. In that it is morally incumbent upon Christians who desire to emulate Christ. We ought to bear the burdens of those who are not strong enough to do so.
 - b. We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak - A scruple is a feeling of doubt or hesitation with regard to the morality of things. Those who are stronger in faith ought to bear with these limitations so long as there is need. For the reasons mentioned in the previous chapter, i.e. that we do not want to destroy them for the sake of our food. But there is another aspect to this as well. He is encouraging us as well as pointing to Christ as our example to say that we should be doing this. Even when they judge us or speak evil of us, we ought to understand their limitations and not respond in a negative manner, but with patience and love, bearing with them through these weaknesses and not turning our backs to them. Rather, through it all, ministering to them as the need arises.
 - c. Not to please ourselves, but our neighbors, for their good - (Mat 16:24) One of the primary lessons as a disciple of Christ is to deny ourselves. If we cannot learn to go without certain comforts or pleasures, especially for the sake and benefit of those we love, how will we ever learn to shoulder our own cross? How shall we withstand persecution and unfair punishments if we cannot or will not deny ourselves in such trivial matters? Selflessness and humility are hallmarks of Christianity. As demonstrated by Jesus when He washed the disciples feet. In Mark 9:35 Jesus says: "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." We are not here to please ourselves and to serve our own desires, but to serve others and minister to their needs with the love of Christ. Therefore we ought to make a habit of observing and serving the needs of others, especially their spiritual needs, for their good with the goal of edification. To help them along in their Christian walk.
 - d. (V3-4) Next we see reasons why we should not aim to please ourselves. The primary one being Christ's example. He did not come to please Himself, but to give Himself for our sake. To the point that He was brought low in humiliation and suffered for those who ultimately hated Him and stood against Him at the time.

- e. Even Christ did not please Himself - In everything regarding Christianity, Jesus is our example and here is no exception. Christ did not come to this earth for the sake of pleasure. When He fasted in the wilderness for 40 days, the devil tempted Him with all the worldly comforts He might ever desire if that was His aim, but it wasn't. He lived a life of obscurity until His public ministry and walked in poverty until His death on the cross. Where He could have had anything He wanted, He gave Himself to the will of the Father in every aspect for the benefit of His sheep. This is what we should constantly have in mind.
- f. As it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." - This quote is taken from Psalm 69:9 and is placed here to show just how far from pleasing Himself Christ actually was. The dishonor and humiliation He endured showed this openly, but what is being said is that all the reproach that was being shown towards God was ultimately felt by Jesus as well. Even after His crucifixion and resurrection He would and does take things personally that were done to the saints. (Acts 26:14, Mat 25:35-40) Not only this, but in a more literal sense, the sins of the people which are undoubtedly reproaches against God were placed on His shoulders. Yet this is why He came, not to please Himself.
- g. For whatever things were written before were written for our learning - As Paul has just used Psalm 69 and the writings of David to apply directly to Christ, we also must use Scripture for our benefit and learning. And he is primarily speaking of the Old Testament at the time, but of course the New Testament should be treated the same. There are so many examples of saints and sinners that we can emulate and learn from that we are doing ourselves a serious disservice if we avoid reading and making use of them. In this example we can see not only Christ, but David also suffered reproach and went to the Lord in prayer for help and comfort. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17) Everything written in the Bible is for our sake. For our comfort in tough times that we may know in advance to endure with patience and continue with steadfast hope knowing that our Lord is watching over us and working everything for our good.
- h. (V4-5) Paul now interjects a prayer for that which he has just endeavored to have them understand. That they might all be like minded towards one another and glorify God with one voice in unity to the glory of our Lord.
- i. The God of patience and comfort - Just a quick note on the title he uses for God. It should be known that there is no patience and comfort apart from God. The Holy Spirit grants us these things as fruit of the Spirit to endure through hardships with joy. Where we receive peace and joy, let us also share it with others and be like minded so as not to disturb the precious unity that Christ died for.
- j. Like minded toward one another - First of all and once again we may notice that he is asking that these things be granted for the fact that all good things come from God. The request is that they may think alike in regards to how they treat each other. But specifically in accordance with the principles that Christ has taught us. To treat everyone the way we want to be treated. There is no more Jew or Greek, but brothers and sisters in Christ, who make up the body of Christ collectively. Therefore the way we treat each other is the way we treat Him. It is also worth noting that he is not asking that we all think the same things,

(outside of foundational doctrine) but to think the same way. In that we patiently endure each other's differences as Christ did, for the sake of unity and peace within the church which ultimately leads to greater praise and glory to God. And when we do this we may as one body with one mouth praise God all the more loudly and proudly with the purest joy in our hearts. Not with contentions and strife and lamentations about our annoying brother, but with love and thankfulness for the family He has given us despite all of our differences.

87. 15:7-13 Once again an exhortation to unity. To receive each other the way that Christ has received us. We were sinners set against Him, yet with love He endured for our sake. Therefore the strong ought to receive the weak and the weak the strong all to the glory of God. For we all belong to Him and must be careful not to reject or despise the ones He has received. But here Paul lays out specific reasoning on behalf of Jews and of Gentiles with Scriptural support.

- a. (V7) Receive one another as Christ has received us, to the glory of God - Jesus received us into His family, as adopted children, as brothers and sisters... friends to share in the joy and peace and love of God as well the future kingdom with even more joy and splendor. All of this is a blessing beyond comprehension, but the end goal is and was always to glorify God. It's so easy to forget what we are doing...our end goal, as we go about our day, but the glory of God should be our focus. How are we glorifying Him? Are we thankful? Are we receiving his children as Christ received us? What once divided us no longer remains. National boundaries, heritage, culture, even former religious affiliations mean nothing as blood bought believers. Therefore we ought to receive the one whom Christ died for, no matter who it is, with thanks and praise to God for his mercy and love.
- b. (V8) Here we see Paul offer one last reasoning for unity between the Jews and Gentiles. Jesus became a servant to the circumcision - And by this he means Israel. Do not think down upon them even if they are the weaker brother with peculiarities and meat restrictions. It was to them that Jesus came to minister, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Mat 15:24) He was born a Jew, under the law, under circumcision, and every seeming peculiarity they are unsure to let go, Jesus also partook that the word of God may be found true and that the promises He made to the forefathers would be fulfilled as God is a holy God and will always bring His word to fruition.
- c. (V9-12) But there is another reason Jesus came to the Israelites, "that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy" - Do not scoff at them as heathens, do not try to put the yoke of the law upon them either. They did not grow up in your customs or with your laws. Neither do your laws produce holiness or else you wouldn't need Jesus at all. But Christ came to you with forgiveness as brethren and offers His forgiveness to them as well that they might also glorify God for His mercy and as one family through Christ, we may all glorify God together. Just as it is written: And here he quotes 4 different Scriptures to once again show that this was all foretold and God does not speak in vain; all that He says will come to pass.
- d. "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles" - Psalm 18:49 As he has already shown earlier in the epistle, Scripture has foretold that the Gentiles would have the gospel preached to them. And the occasion for writing this Psalm was a heartfelt gratitude by David for deliverance from his enemies. A desire to let the world know of the saving grace of God almighty.

- e. (V10) And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" - Deut 32:43 Even going back to the time of Moses there was cause for the Gentiles to rejoice. For God is powerful as well as loving and merciful and when they were in the midst of the Jewish encampment, they were in the midst of God. Then there was a division, a middle wall, but now there is no such division thanks to Christ.
 - f. (V11) And again: "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" - Psalm 117:1 There is certainly reason to praise Him. For all that has been said and done, the Gentiles have received the same grace as the Jews. All the world has been offered this grace. No one deserved it, but when God's grace is received, people will praise His holy name. Especially the Gentiles who once served wooden statues and dead idols.
 - g. (V12) Finally, he quotes Isaiah 11:10: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope." - The quote is not word for word from the original text, but the meaning is that from the line of Jesse, Christ, the son of David in the flesh, will be the beacon of hope for the Gentiles. He will be risen like a banner for the people to seek and to follow. And in Him the Gentiles will find their hope.
 - h. (V13) Once again Paul prays for them to find the peace and joy of God. We might notice that as before in verse 5-6, he addresses God as the God of hope. And much for the same reason, as it is only in and through Christ that we have any real hope in this world or otherwise. And what he prays for, is that they might be filled with the joy and peace he mentioned in the previous chapter. (14:17) Both of which come as gifts of the Spirit as we more fully understand our justification through faith in Christ and our reconciliation to God. The deeper our peace and joy, the more readily we receive others and bear with whatever weakness might manifest itself. As well as to rest in the promised hope of our salvation. Though we might note again, it is hope by the power of the Spirit.
88. 15:14-21 Having concluded the primary purpose of the epistle, he now begins his closing statements by commending them as he did in the beginning, and explaining to some degree why he wrote to them in the first place.
- a. (V14) See 1:8 He offers them praise once more for their goodness as well their ability to admonish each other as needed in the things he has written. On his end, it is a wise thing to offer praise where you can, especially if there is need to be harsh at times. If we want people to be receptive to what we say, setting them on the defense is not the best way to approach the matter. Not only this, but it makes people feel good to be commended and sets them at ease. This was a serious letter filled with alot of information and Paul wants to let them know they are loved and there is nothing that could change this.
 - b. They are full of goodness and knowledge and the ability to admonish - This is saying quite a bit. And for all that he has written it is likely that for these characteristics they would readily put his teaching into practice. As they would know he is speaking truth and be receptive to the will of God. And not only be receptive, but to speak these truths to each other, correcting where needed. Which is perhaps why he writes as bold as he does.
 - c. (V15-16) For all the commendations are worth he still justifies the reason for writing so boldly and cushions this with the fact that it is due to a measure of grace given to him by God. It wasn't simply his own thoughts or will or desire, but a gift and commission from God to act in this capacity. As a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and he was the

chief minister to the gentiles. It is his duty to serve Jesus in this way and he wants to make sure they are prepared for good works and sanctified in the truth. Not only this, but he is only reminding them of what they already know. And when it comes to the things of God, we can never know too much.

- d. (17-21) Now that he has mentioned his ministry he goes on to highlight the significance and authority thereof. He has reason to glory in Christ for all efforts have not been in vain, but from Jerusalem to Illyricum he has preached the gospel with signs and wonders to bring the Gentiles into obedience with the will of God. Not where other men have already preached, but where the gospel was unknown, that is where he went and harvested fruit.
 - e. Some things we can take note of: 1. The many places he preached and his efforts to spread the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum. We would be hard pressed to find someone who did more to spread the word than did the apostle Paul. As he mentions here, he personally spread the gospel far and wide. By many accounts he traveled over 10,000 miles and most of this done on foot. 2. That he preached where others had never been. In so many places he laid a foundation of Christianity that would and do exist thousands of years later. He was bold to go where they worshiped idols and suffered much for it. From Gentiles as well as from Jews. And he quotes Scripture (Isa 52:15) to once again highlight the prophetic aspect of it all. This was God's will for him to partake in this matter. 3. He gives all credit to Christ. He will not speak of anything that he did himself, but only what Christ has done through him. For all the good that he or we can do is thanks to the Spirit of Christ within us. Whether that be the mighty signs and miracles he mentions or the conversion of souls, nothing can be accomplished outside the will and acceptance of God.
89. 15:22-29 Paul now gives some details and accounts to his plans and purposes. He has been hindered from coming to see them, but now that he has been freed up, he plans to do so when he can. But first he must travel to Jerusalem to deposit an offering.
- a. (V22) For this reason he has been hindered - For the work that he just mentioned. All the travels he has made and all the efforts he has put forth to plant the seeds of the gospel. He has wanted to come and see them, but up until this point he has been working nonstop elsewhere in places they had never heard the word of God before. Also, it was them he wanted to come see, hinder from "coming to you". He continues to express his care and concern for them in different ways.
 - b. (V23-24) Once again (1:10) he mentions this desire that he has had to come see them. Many years he has desired, and as we see from the opening of his epistle he has always held them in high esteem and constantly in his prayers, offering thanks to God for their great faith. And now, it seems to him that he might very well be able to come and see them on his way to Spain. We might note here that it is God's will that directs our steps. (Pro 16:9) Though Paul so desired, there were many things that prevented him from coming to Rome. And perhaps for good reason as the Romans already had such great faith and less of a need for direct oversight that other churches had.
 - c. No longer having a place in these parts - He is speaking of Greece and the reason being was that he had already done much to spread the gospel and establish churches and pastors in his place. And with his work concluding in one part, he was looking ahead to where he might travel next, in this case Spain, though not before stopping in Jerusalem.

And though he mentions that he shall come to them on his way to Spain, he prefaces the visit with "I hope to see you". For it is not his will that he seeks to do, but God's. And as we know, Paul did not come to Rome but as a prisoner.

- d. to be helped on my way by you - Part of the reason to come see them was not only for the enjoyment of their company, but also to be helped on his way. What that means specifically is not described, but in chapter 1 he said "that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."(1:12) It is possible that he wanted not only to enjoy their friendship and common faith, but perhaps needed a place to stay as well as a hope to travel together in part. He might also have been seeking contributions for the work he was planning to do in Spain as he mentions this sort of thing in the next few verses.
 - e. (V25) The reason he can't come immediately is because he has other important business to attend to. He needed to make his way to Jerusalem to minister the poor saints and deliver an offering from the saints in Macedonia and Achaia. (Acts 11:28-30)
 - f. (V26-27) He mentions the origins of the donations with a seeming purpose to invoke a like-minded attitude as he goes on to express the duty of one who has partaken of spiritual things to help in material things. Macedonia and Achaia are both regions in Greece. The Philippians were in Macedonia and the Corinthians in Achaia. We might note that while Paul mentions it a duty, it was a pleasing duty for those that were giving. 2 Cor 9:7 "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." And in this we might also observe one of the purposes for the body of Christ. To help care for each other as there is need, as one functioning body.
 - g. (V28-29) When all is said and done, and the alms delivered, he finally intends to visit before heading on to Spain. Again, this did not happen, but such was his plan. Notice he calls the donations fruit. As it is from a loving and charitable heart to give to those in need. Not only kind, but faithful as servants of God's bounty to distribute His wealth where needed. And when he does come, he intends to do so in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Though what exactly he was intending to say is not clear. It could be as he mentioned in chapter 1:11-12, to impart some spiritual gifts, or simply that when he comes it shall be in accordance with God's will for the gospel of Christ. That he will have the full blessing of God to do so.
90. 15:30-33 Finally he requests prayers for his efforts. For protection from the hostility in Judea as well as success in his service to the saints.
- a. (V30-32) Paul does not shy away from requesting the much needed prayers. Perhaps the need for begging was because they did not know him personally and he didn't want them to neglect it. Or maybe it was because the need was that great and he wanted to press the urgency. He appeals to them as brethren through Christ, through the love of the Spirit to strive with him in prayer in multiple things. 1. That he be delivered from the dangers he would soon face. The unbelieving Jews were very dangerous to the early Christians. Perhaps the most violent and dangerous of all as Paul knows well enough. And against him specifically for his prominent role in spreading the gospel. 2. That his service for those in Jerusalem would be acceptable. Why wouldn't it be acceptable? It seems there may have been some timidity from the believing Jews on account of him primarily ministering to the Gentiles. 3. Finally that his journey to them may come to fruition, that he may come to them

with joy by the will of God and be refreshed together with them. Well, there is a consideration that he may have been hoping for a successful visit to Jerusalem to which he would then come to Rome full of Joy. But that did not happen as Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and brought to Rome as a prisoner.

- b. (V33) One last prayer, that the God of peace be with them all. Especially so as the last chapter and a half had to do with unity and brotherly love. But even if it had not, we always have a need for fellowship with God and His Spirit. And it would seem that he might originally concluded his message here, yet continues on one more chapter.

91. Chapter 15 self test

- a. (V1) How should the strong in faith interact with those weaker?
- b. (V2-3) Why should we aim to please others rather than ourselves?
- c. (V5-6) Why is it important to be like-minded toward one another?
- d. (V7-9) What final reasons does Paul give for the Jews and Gentiles to receive each other?
- e. (V15) What are some of the reasons Paul wrote as boldly as he did?
- f. What reason(s) does Paul give for not coming to Rome?
- g. (V27) Why does Paul say the saints making an offering were debtors?
- h. Did Paul ever intend to visit Rome?
- i. What were the three things Paul asked the Roman saints to pray for?

92. Chapter 15 review: While he begins to close out his letter, Paul leaves them with some final exhortations to bear with each other's burdens as that is exactly what Christ did. Therefore we also ought to aim, not to please ourselves but our neighbors. And receive one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. For He was born under the circumcision to fulfill the promises of God, but was preached to the Gentiles as well that they might glorify God for His mercy. Paul leaves them with some commendations and explains his boldness in places while finally giving them some insight to his plans and travels and asking for reciprocal prayers in turn.

93. Chapter 16 In what seems like a long "P.S", Paul picks up the writing in this final chapter to express some love and gratitude towards fellow saints and exhort the Romans to receive Phoebe and greet others. And with a final word of caution to note those who cause division he signs off with a lengthy benediction.

94. 16:1-16 Aside from the commendation of Phoebe, this portion of the epistle is filled with greeting to various saints.

- a. (V1-2) He commends Phoebe, a sister in Christ. And he requests that she be received in a manner worthy of the saints. He says she has been a helper of many including Paul himself, likely in acts of charity and hospitality. She was from Cenchræa which was a small town

near Corinth. It is believed by many that she is the one who was delivering this epistle. Or at least attending the delivery with others.

- b. (V3) Pricilla and Aquilla - We read of these two in Acts 18:2-3 where it is said Paul met them in Corinth where he stayed with them and worked. We can see that Aquilla was a Jew born in Pontus although they were living in Italy until Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. This command must have been lifted as Paul is now sending greetings to them via the Roman church. In addition to lodging Paul and working with them, they were travel companions, at least for a time (Acts 18:18) and are credited with teaching a man named Apollos the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26) And with some additional detail seen in this greeting, we can see that they put themselves in danger for his sake. For which he says not only he, but all the Gentiles give thanks to them. And lastly he mentions their house church, to greet them. Also mentioned in 1 Cor 16:19. Just a note to say that we don't need any large congregation or fancy building to worship God. So long as we have loving brothers and sisters gathered together in the name of Christ. (Mat 18:20)
 - c. Epaenetus - Mentioned here in verse 5, called "my beloved". It is says he is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ, one of the first to be converted to the faith.
 - d. Mary (V6) - Not much is known of her outside what Paul speaks here, that she labored much for them. Mary was a common name and it is not certain who she is.
 - e. Andronicus and Junia (V7) - Some translations have it that they are "kinsmen", whether they were literal relatives is not clear, but we can say that they were close to him nonetheless, and especially so as they shared prison time with him. There is uncertainty as to whether Junia is a man or woman and how the two are related to each other, but as he mentions here, they had the attention and favor of the apostles which is saying much.
 - f. Amplias, Urbanus, Stachys and Apelles as well as Aristobulus, Herodion and Narcissus (V8-11) Not much is said about these individuals other than to note they are beloved or notable for their work and efforts in Christ.
 - g. Tryphena and Tryphosa and Persis - Women mentioned for their laborious efforts.
 - h. Rufus (V13) - Mentioned as chosen in the Lord. His mother is also mentioned and here Paul says "his mother and mine" likely in the sense that older women were to be treated as mothers as he teaches in 1 Tim 5:2.
 - i. Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. - There isn't much to say about these individuals personally. However we can observe from his inclusion of them as well as the rest, the love that he has for them all. To take the time to list and name those he personally knew in Rome would mean a great deal to them.
 - j. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you. - The holy kiss was a common greeting in those days in that area. Said to be an "Eastern" and Jewish custom. It is mentioned in 1 Cor 16:20, 2 Cor 13:12, 1 Thess 5:26. Likely just a kiss on the cheek but one done with a loving intent as 1 Pet 5:14 calls it a kiss of love. The churches of Christ mentioned here were likely the churches he was involved with at the time.
95. 16:17-20 Having pressed the matter of unity, Paul seems to recall one more sound piece of advice. Avoid those who intend to disrupt that unity. We strive together to be like-minded therefore we must avoid those who counteract our efforts.

- a. I urge you, brethren - Just a quick note to point out that he is not commanding this be so, but imploring and almost begging them to take this matter as being that serious. It would be natural for us to want to separate from those who disagree with us. The Jews and Gentiles probably felt most comfortable with their former compatriots, but this is not the way he has been teaching them and so he is urging them to stand fast.
- b. Note those who cause division and offenses - (Phi 3:17-19) He is warning us here. It is not enough to fend off faulty ideas and correct misguided thoughts. We must be observant of where these ideas come from and who is propagating them. Note them, mark them and make them known. If there is a wolf hiding amongst the sheep we must learn to spot them and drive them away. As well as to reveal them for what they are. Selfish, prideful and deceiving enemies of God.
- c. Contrary to the doctrine which you learned - This is not about those disagreements regarding food and holidays or the secondary matters which he has already addressed, and that we must handle with loving charity. Although if there are some **deliberately** causing problems over food and holidays, there is no difference as they are disregarding the law of love and we are to avoid them all the same. But what he is speaking of here is the sound doctrines of the faith that he expounded through the first 11 chapters. Or that they have learned from the other apostles. We must be able to spot the difference between truthful errors and deliberate falsehoods. Correcting those who need to be corrected and avoiding those who intend to divide for their own gain.
- d. Avoid them - Do not have fellowship with them. Do not lend them your ear. Pray for them as you ought, but avoid them as much as possible. For as we can see in the next verse, they are not friends of God, but serve Satan and desire to see us fall. They will manipulate, deceive, trick, coerce or attempt to guilt you in some way. They will pretend to be virtuous, pretend to serve God, but all the while they are undermining His plans. Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." (1 Cor 15:33)
- e. (V18)For those who are such do not serve our Lord - The implication is that they pretend to serve our Lord. They will walk with Christians and call themselves Christian, but do not follow the commands of our master. (Luke 6:46) And do not have any intention to submit themselves to His authority. Instead they intend to use the loving and trustworthy nature of Christians to obtain some selfish desire. To fill their bellies or gain prominence in some way. To make connections or gain an advantage in some other area of life. How?
- f. By smooth words and flattering speech deceive - "A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet." (Pro 29:5) They will do whatever they can to get into your good graces. Flattery is defined as: excessive and insincere praise, given especially to further one's own interest. It won't always be obvious so we need to be perceptive. The problem is they are looking to subvert the simple minded. So even if we are wise to their tricks, we need to be on the lookout to help those unaware. (Job 32:21-22, Psalm 5:9, 55:21)
- g. (V19-20) He is glad to hear of their obedience to the word of God, but there is still reason to be cautious. We can never let our guard down in this regard, but must be wise in what is good. He also says to be simple concerning evil. The term simple here is not used the same way as mentioned in the previous verse. In Verse 18 he is using the word to speak of those who may be naive and unsuspecting, but here it is to say keep things simple. Do not mix

good and evil, do not bend the lines, but keep it simple and stay vigilant in these matters. Stand strong and the God of peace, as mentioned in the previous chapter (15:33), will deliver you from your enemy and crush him as promised from the beginning. (Gen 3:15)

96. 16:21-27 The final goodbyes, greetings and benediction

- a. Timothy - The man to whom 1st and 2nd Timothy are written. We first read about him in Acts 16, and here is named as a fellow worker.
- b. Lucius - Perhaps the Lucius of Cyrene mentioned in Acts 13:1, a notable man in the church of Antioch
- c. Jason - Acts 17:5-9 speaks of a Jason in Thessalonica who was arrested for hosting Paul and Barnabas.
- d. Sosipater - Believed to be Sopater of Berea mentioned in Acts 20:4, who accompanied Paul to Asia. All of these are said to be the countrymen of Paul. Some translations have it as fellow Jews or kinsman.
- e. Tertius - Paul's amanuensis or scribe. A literary assistant who takes dictation or copies manuscripts. It is not clear if Paul spoke to him as with dictation or if Paul originally wrote in his own hand and Tertius copied in a more legible form.
- f. Gaius - It is not known which Gaius this is as there are multiple people with this name. Gaius of Derbe - Acts 20:4, Gaius of Macedonia - Acts 19:29, Gaius of Corinth - 1 Cor 1:14, and the epistle of 3 John is addressed to someone named Gaius. But whichever it may be, he is commended for his hospitality as the host of the entire church. Likely to use his house as a meeting place for church business as needed.
- g. Erastus - Treasurer of the city of Corinth, he is mentioned in Acts 19:22 as accompanying Timothy on behalf of Paul's orders and again in 2 Tim 4:20.
- h. Quartus - Simply mentioned as a brother, i.e., in Christ as are all true believers thus related.
- i. (V25) Benediction: is the invoking of a blessing. There are many throughout the Scriptures and they are often repeated at the end of church service. Here Paul takes this opportunity one last time to pour out his heart with praise for the glory of God.
- j. Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel - Speaking of God, as only God is capable of establishing souls and granting us the faith and understanding to receive His word. The reference to "my gospel" does not mean that Paul had a separate and distinct gospel from the rest of the apostles as he proceeds to say "and the preaching of Jesus Christ." It is simply a reference to the fact that he is the preacher delivering the message in this epistle. Where in truth it is Christ's preaching.
- k. Revelation of the mystery - From the moment the world began, the gospel was a mystery slowly revealed through prophets and Scripture. It's not something that man has manifested in wisdom, but that God has chosen to reveal that we might find redemption through His Son. Once the exclusive holding of the Jews, now preached and made known, as Christ commanded, to all nations. Not simply to recognize Christ as king or invite him into our hearts, but that we might be brought into obedience to the will of God.
- l. To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen - Wisdom is but one of the many attributes of God. So far greater than our own, and Jesus is manifest as the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:24) Without Christ we would be left destitute sinners. He is our mediator in all things for without His righteousness, we cannot please God in any way. Nor would we desire to. Thus even our praise of God's glory must rightfully go through Him. (Heb 13:15) Praise be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.