

CHAPTER NINE

09.01 : Verses 1 to 29 : God's Choice

I speak the truth in Christ - I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit - ...
Verse 1

Paul begins this section with some very solemn words. He makes two statements: (1) I speak the truth in Christ and (2) my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit. We know what it means to speak the truth, though there are some who don't. But, what does it mean with "in Christ" attached? Similarly how does one's conscience confirm it "in the Holy Spirit"?

We have dealt in these lessons with our two natures. We looked at Paul's struggle in chapter 7 where these two natures did battle within him. The Greek of this verse says, literally, "Truth I speak in Christ..." Paul says that what he is about to say is coming from his new spirit nature and not from his old sin nature. What he has to say comes from his association with Jesus Christ and as a result of Christ living within him and controlling his thought.

In a similar manner, in chapter 8 we say how the Spirit works with us to aid us and to intercede for us. Here Paul says that there is no conflict between what his conscience is telling him and what the Spirit is directing him to say. One might say that this is an early example of the Pope speaking "ex-cathedra", speaking not his own mind but God's. But Paul wasn't the "pope" and what Paul here does we all can do if we simply yield our spirits to God's Spirit.

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
Verse 2

With the same degree of soberness, Paul writes verse 2 in which he expresses two feelings: (1) great sorrow and (2) unceasing anguish of heart. If Paul is currently "in Christ" and in agreement with the Holy Spirit, how can he have such feelings?

Recall that Jesus himself had sorrow over the things he observed, particularly in Jerusalem.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it. [Luke 19:41]

There are things which can, and should, cause us to have great sorrow and anguish of heart. The reason for Paul's sorrow is given...

For I could wish myself cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. Verses 3-5

If there is any place in Paul's letters that we might wonder about his sincerity, it is here. He says that, in effect, if only Israel could all be saved through his being cutoff from Christ. Would you give up your salvation so that some others might be saved? Some of us might be willing to give up our lives for the salvation of others. Many have done this. But to give up one's position with Christ?

We shall consider this point further later. But look at Paul's point here. What has God

done for Israel? Paul spells it out in detail.

1) The adoption as sons: This status we have discussed before; it was first offered to Israel.

2) The divine glory: When the tabernacle was completed, God's glory came to dwell with them...

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.
[Exodus 40:34]

3) The covenants: All of the covenants, from the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12) onward were made with Israel.

4) The receiving of the Law. Paul has spoken about the law and, in spite of its being unable to bring salvation, was something that God gave to Israel and only to Israel.

5) The temple worship. No one other than a Jew was ever allowed to worship in the temple.

6) The promises. All of the Old Testament promises, from Abraham on, were made to Israel.

7) Christ Himself, humanly speaking, came into the line of the patriarchs of Israel.

Israel had much done for it from God and yet, the majority of Israel rejected Jesus Christ and continues to do so. How could they do such a thing when God had done so much for them?

Things are not so much different with Gentiles. We can look at many people who have been encouraged and helped and pampered by the church. They have had considerable attention paid to them and yet they never come to a real acceptance of Jesus Christ either. It sometimes seems that maybe we do too much for some people!

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "Through Isaac shall your offspring come." Verses 6-8

Paul now states that the fact that most of Israel rejected Jesus Christ does not make null and void God's promises. He states this with two parallel points:

- 1) Not all of Israel's seed really belong to Israel
- 2) Not all of Abraham's seed belong to Abraham.

These should not be surprising statements: Today we could certainly add a third...

Not all who profess to be Christians are saved!

Technically, when we refer to Genesis 21 to which Paul refers, we see the proof of the second statement. Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. In Genesis 21:8-13, Abraham and Sarah were concerned about what share Ishmael had in Abraham's inheritance, God made the above statement. While Ishmael would be rewarded, it was through Isaac that the promise would come and, so, not all who are descendants of Abraham are the seed referred to here. But this doesn't answer the question with regards to the first statement.

Paul now clarifies this position with the next statement.

In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. For this is how the promise was stated: "at the appointed time I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."

Verses 8-9

At the time the above promise was made to Abraham, he already had a son. You may object and say, "yes, but Ismael was a son by Hagar and not by Sarah, so he doesn't count!" But! Go back and read from Genesis 12:1 to 17:15. Nowhere in this section does God ever say that the son had to be born of Sarah. It is only after Ishmael was born that the promise that Sarah would bare a son was made.

You see, God could have fulfilled his promise to Abraham through Ishmael. God did not punish Abraham for Ishmael or condemn him. God did bless Ishmael. But Ishmael was not the one that God chose. Ishmael was one of Abraham's seed, but was not the "son of the promise". Paul continues.

Not only that, but Rebecca's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad - in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls - she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it was written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Verses 10-13

Paul now has in view Isaac's two sons. God passed over the first born, which normally receives the blessing and chose Jacob. Why?

Why did God choose Jacob and not Esau? We are told several things here:

- 1) God loved Jacob but hated Esau
- 2) Neither Jacob nor Esau had a chance to do good (or bad)
- 3) God's purpose in election stood.

The first statement seems to tell us why God chose one over the other or, at least, it gives us the basis. He chose Jacob because he loved him and not Esau. But it doesn't tell us why he loved one and not the other.

The second statement is a negative statement. It tells us that the reason for God loving one and hating the other couldn't be on the basis of anything that they did, for they were chosen before they were even born.

Finally, we are told that God chose them before they had time to do anything so that his "purpose in election" might stand. What does this mean? Phillips puts it quite clearly, "plainly showing that God's act of choice has nothing to do with achievements - good or bad". Taylor puts it, "This proves that God was doing what he decided from the beginning; it was not because of what the children did but because of what God wanted and chose."

This is all well and good but it leads to the next logical question...

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not depend, therefore, on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

Verses 14-16

So far, from what we have seen in this passage, it seems like God is rather arbitrary in choosing one person and rejecting another. Is he? Paul asks "Is God unjust?" He answers with an emphatic "No" and then explains why. He quotes Exodus 33:19 in which the Lord says, to put it loosely, "I will bless whoever I choose to bless ... that's my prerogative" To put it somewhat coarsely, "Who is stronger or more powerful than God? If God wants to do something, who can stop him?" Note, however, the words are all positive. God will have

mercy on some. God will have compassion on some. It doesn't say that God will "do dirt to the ones he wants to do dirt to".

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

Verses 17-18

Now we are in trouble. Paul now contradicts what we just stated. He brings up the subject of Pharaoh and says that God "hardens whome he wants to harden". Does this mean that Pharaoh had no choice in being a "bad guy"?

Consider the following verses:

"Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart"

[Exodus 10:1]

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart

[Exodus 10:20,27]

[Exodus 11:20]

The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

[Exodus 14:8]

We have here verse after verse that says that the Lord did just this, that he did harden Pharaoh's heart. But also consider the following:

But when Pharaoh saw there was relief, he hardened his heart. [Exodus 8:15]

But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart...

[Exodus 8:32]

He and his officials hardened their hearts...

[Exodus 9:34]

In these earlier verses we find Pharaoh hardening his own heart. God, in Exodus, is only enlarging upon what Pharaoh himself is doing. Furthermore, if one pursues the Hebrew of the book of Exodus, when Pharaoh hardend his own heart, the Hebrew word used indicates a change of something from one form to another whereas the word used when God goes it simply means to firm up a thing in the condition it is presently in.

In one sense, it is true that God raised up Pharaoh do do his "dirty work" but that does not necessarily get Pharaoh off the hook. The question now is, if God chose to use Pharaoh to be a "bad guy", then can we blame Pharaoh for the way he turned out?

One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?"

Verse 19

There, Paul asked the question for us.

What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath - prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for his glory - even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Verses 22-25

Verse 22 in the NIV is misleading as it is in the KJV. We turn to the NAS reading which has "What if God, although willing to demonstrate his power...". The NIV and the KJV would have us understand that God would show his wrath through his long suffering which makes no sense.

God, because of his nature as God, would desire to exercise his wrath against evil and to demonstrate his power in so doing. This is simply God's nature. But part of God's nature is showing grace on those whom he chooses. Because of this, God withholds his wrath and, instead, demonstrates his great patience.

"Objects of his wrath" is "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" in the KJV. In verse 21 the NIV speaks of "pottery" whereas the KJV has a more literal translation "vessel" which appears here also in verse 22. Paul has spoken of God as creating and forming people as differing types of vessels. Now he speaks of a particular kind of vessel.

As we look at this in detail, we shall look at the contrasting vessel in verse 23. Let's compare these:

objects of wrath - prepared for destruction
objects of mercy - prepared for glory

The NIV here makes no distinction in the use of the word "prepared". In verse 23, the word is {proetoimazo}. Without the prefix it means "to prepare" and is found in a number of places, such as...

There are many rooms in my fathers house ... I am going there to prepare a place for you...
[John 14:2]

and means just what it says, to prepare something for an intended event or use. Here the word is prefixed with the term than means "ahead of time" and hence to "prepare in advance" as is found in the NIV. The word is found only one other place,

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. [Ephesians 2:10]

In verse 22 the word for "prepared" is {katartizo} which is also found in the following passages.

They were in a boat with their father Zbedee, preparing their nets. [Matthew 4:21]
...mending their nets [Matthew 4:21 KJV]

Brothers, if someone is caught in sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.
[Galatians 6:1]

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at god's command...
[Hebrews 11:3]

May the God of peace ... equip you with every good thing for doing his will... [Hebrews

13:20,21]

And the God of all grace ... will himself restore you and make you strong. [1 Peter 5:10]

Thus the word is translated as "restore", "formed", and "equip" as well as "prepared". Vincent (Word Studies in the New Testament) makes these contrasts between the "preparation" of the two vessels.

Verse 22	Verse 23
Prepared for Destruction	Prepared for glory
not in advance	...in advance
RESULT is emphasized	PREVIOUS is emphasized
Indefinit agency	direct agency of God
A process is indicated	A Single act

That it is not God who "prepares" the vessels unto wrath is indicated by passages such as...

They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come to them at last.

[1 Thessalonians 2:15,16]

Note also the distinction in time. God, as we have noted in previous lessons, has predestined certain ones and this is seen here also in his preparing us "in advance". But the text indicates that he does not prepare "in advance" wrath on others but, as a matter of point, is long suffering and does not prepare it until the last minute.

Note finally, the clear reference that Gentiles are included in this calling as well as Israel.

As he says in Hosea:

"I will call them my people who are not my people; and I will call her my loved one who is not my loved one."

and,

"I will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called the sons of the living God."

Verses 25,26

Paul now quotes from Hosea as he presents his case. First he quotes Hosea 2:23. The strange thing about his quoting these passages is that, even though we might suspect that the "people who are not my people" refers to the Gentiles, a careful study of Hosea will show that this refers to Israel who for these many years, have not been "his people".

Why, then, does Paul quote Hosea? Basically, it is the argument that God can take to himself those who have been rejected. The passage in Hosea refers to the Millennium when God will take back his people Israel. But, for our times, God has taken a different people to be his people.

Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites should be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant will be saved. For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality. It is just as Isaiah said previously: "Unless the Lord All-powerful had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom and we would have been like Gomorrah".

Verses 27-29

Paul now quotes from Isaiah and goes beyond this present age and speaks of where Israel fits into all of this. We should like to comment especially on the later part. How many times in the last 2000 years has Israel be nearly destroyed by anti-semitists such as Hitler? But there has always been enough Jews left to carry on and to finally reestablish Israel. Had this not happened, it would have been as Isaiah said, they would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah which no longer exist. But God made a promise to Israel and God will keep that promise.

God has made promises to us as well and he will no more go back on these promises than he would go back on the promise to restore Israel.

What shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not obtained it?

Verses 30 and 31

Paul now asks a very pertinent question. Consider how zealous Isreal (at least the remnant of it) has been in pursuing God. We note how serious a devout Jew is toward the practice of his religion. But, in spite of all this, who is it that God is dealing with today? The Gentiles. And what have we Gentiles done to gain God's favor? Why should God do this? Paul answers the question.

Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled ofer the "stumbling stone". As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

Verses 33-33

Paul quotes here from Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 as does Peter (1 Peter 2). The answer to the question posed above reminds us of the Peanuts cartoon where Charlie Brown is standing on the picther's mond and says "99 to 0 - How could we loose when we are so sincere?". Israel had, indeed, pursued God's righteousness, but not in the right way.

Israel missed that one must come to God by faith and not by works. The quote given to support this deals with two objects (or two descriptions of one object), namely,

a stumbling stone (KJV) {lithon proskommatos}
a rock of offence (KJV) {petran skandalon}

"Stumbling" is {proskommatos} which literally means to strike against a thing and is found in such verses as:

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone

{Matthew 4:6}

[Psalm 91:12]

A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.

[John 11:9,10]

The term here them applies to one who is walking down a path in the dark (or not looking) and trips by stiking his foot against a stone in the path.

"Offence" comes from {skandalon}, the word from which we get the Englisg word "scandal".

The word has an interesting origin, referring to the stick placed in a trap which is used to set the trap off (i.e. the trigger stick). Hence it came to refer to any sort of trap or snare.

The reference is, of course, to Jesus Christ. See Isaiah 8:12-17 which, when trusted in rather than avoiding, is the source of blessing. See Isaiah 28:16.

CHAPTER TEN

10.01 : Verses 1 to 21 :

Brothers, my hearts desire and prayer to god for the Israelites is that they may be saved.
Verse 1

Paul continues his thoughts regarding Israel with two actions which are coupled here together. First, the NIV lists his "heart's desire" (as do the other translations). But we would like to enlarge upon this for a moment. "Heart's Desire" to us probably does not mean what it meant to Paul. First of all, the "heart" to the Greek speaking mind was not the seat of the emotions but the center of ones intellect. In many places it might be better to translate the term "mind" rather than "heart".

"desire" comes from {eudokia} which means, literally, "to think well" or "to think good". It is found translated this way below:

Even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.
[Matthew 11:26 KJV]

The point is that we are not dealing with some "emotional tug" on Paul's heart, but as the result of his concentrated thoughts regarding Israel is that he wanted what was good (or "best") for Israel, namely for their salvation. It was a deep seated and continual desire that dwelt in Paul's mind (or "heart").

This background leads to the second action, his "prayer" for Israel. There are a number of Greek words for "prayer" and this is {deesis} which, when found in connection with other words for prayer is usually translated "supplication" or "requesting". It is a specific type of prayer in which the giver of the prayer is asking for something specific (in contrast to just worshipping God in prayer or praising him, etc.).

Paul concentrated desire for a thing was always coupled with his petitioning God for it, as here. His request was that Israel might be saved.

For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge since they disregarded the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Verses 2 and 3

The Jews, as a whole, always have been a very zealous people, not only in relation to God, but in the seeking of education and in commerce. "Zeal" comes from {zelos} and Paul well knew of what he spoke for we have his testimony,

...a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church...
[Philippians 3:6]

and we can read in Acts just how zealous he was. It is interesting to note how often in the New Testament the word has a bad connotation. As a matter of fact, more often than not it is translated as "envy" or "jealousy". But also, we have,

"Zeal for your house will consume me."
[John 2:17]

About the only passages where it is used in a good sense are in 2 Corinthians (7:7,11 and 9:2) where here it might be argued that the term is used by Paul in an exaggerated sense

in order to press a point.

Perhaps the problem with the word is that zealosity and works seem to go hand in hand. We can look today and ask who are the most zealous today. The Jehovah's Witnesses are very zealous about their calling program. Why? Because they get "punches in their holy badges" for what they do - works!

Paul's words here remind us of the Peanuts cartoon where Charlie Brown is standing forelorn on the pitcher's mound and says "99 to 0! How could we lose when we are so sincere?" Paul acknowledges that the Jews are a very zealous people but then says that, unfortunately, their zeal is misguided. Why?

Since they disregarded the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Verse 3

Let's consider the verbs of action in this verse. These are;

- 1) disregard {agnoeo}
- 2) seek [zeteo}
- 3) submit {hupotasso}

"Disregard" is translated "ignorance" in the KJV. The verb means "to not know" which, of course, relates to ignorance. It is a little difficult to see where the NIV gets "disregard" except that in noting that we get "agnostic" from this term which does not denote a person who has not been instructed concerning the things of God but of a person who is willfully ignorant of God. Perhaps this is a valid interpretation since the Gospel message is in the Old Testament if one looks for it.

Finally, the term may mean disregard since the ignorance comes because of misdirected efforts. The Jews, according to this verse, were seeking something else. To "seek" means to "look for something in expectation of finding it". The Jews, after having received the promises of God, were seeking after righteousness, expecting to find it. Why didn't they find it? Why were they ignorant of the way?

The last verb is "submit". The word means "to place oneself underneath another" or, in other words "to become subject to someone else". Here is the catch. One of the things that man has sought throughout the ages is freedom. We do not like to have someone else telling us what to do. The Jews were supposed to be under subjection to God for thousands of years but were they? They continually rebelled against God's control over them.

When Israel sought righteousness, their way was clear for them to follow but there was a problem. It required them to submit to God's authority and God's plan. Israel was not willing to do it God's way. They wanted to find a way on their own to do it.

Israel is no different than any man today. We recall the ad for a headache cure on TV several years ago with the lady who yelled "Please Mother! I'd rather do it myself!". We naturally (old sin nature(lly)) rebel against doing something according to someone else's plan.

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Verse 4

The Jews sought after a plan whereby they could obtain righteousness on their own. But

Christ is the absolute and final way of obtaining righteousness and hence, obtaining righteousness through the law, or through any other means, has come to an end.

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven' (that is to bring Christ down), or, 'Who will descend into the deep?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart"

Verses 5-8

Paul now uses the Old Testament to further describe the situation. First, he quotes from Leviticus 18:5. The quote appears at the beginning of a set of ordinances which must be kept rather than doing what was practiced in Egypt or in Canaan (see 18:3). The point of this passage is that, yes, one can be saved if one follows the strict letter of the law given to Moses. But, thousands of years have passed since the law was given and no one yet (except Christ) has been able to keep the entire law.

So, that being the case, Paul then turns to Deuteronomy 13. The quote is from verses 12 to 14 but is not very literal. It would be good to consider the verse the precedes the part quoted.

Now that I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.
[Deuteronomy 30:11]

Paul, likewise is using this passage to tell us that the obtainment of righteousness is not beyond our reach. We do not have to ascend into heaven in order to bring Christ down - God sent His son to us in order that we might obtain righteousness through him. We need not descend into the deep in order to bring Christ back from the dead - God raised him from the dead in order to assure us of eternal life. In other words, God has done all the work - there is no work for you or I to do in connection with salvation or righteousness.

Finally, the last part of the quotation tells us where our salvation lies. The quotation says "it is in your mouth and in your heart". Paul does not quote the rest of the verse which says "...so you may obey it" which means that one has memorized the word and recited it so that it becomes a part of him and he can thus obey it. Instead, Paul adds his own ending, "...that is the word of faith." What does this mean? Let us go on and see.

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Verse 9

We here should point out a parallel with what we began this lesson with. We spoke of Paul's "heart" (hence "mind") and how what he resolved in his mind was worked out in what he said as he prayed to God for Israel. Here we have the same connection. First the "heart" (man's inner being, his mind) believes the Gospel message of which the heart is the resurrection of Christ. Then, as an outworking of this there is the confession with the mouth that Christ is Lord. Again, to sum up these last few verses, we do no work, we simply believe and confess.

For it is with the heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "He who believes in him will not be put to shame."

Verses 10 and 11

We have already commented on what Paul here says but there is one point we have not

yet considered. Paul says "with the mouth you confess and are saved". Does this mean that we can not be saved if we do not publicly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord?

The text includes the confession with the belief. But this would then involve works, would it not? What is the answer? The question is to be settled on the same basis as for the question regarding grace and works. If a person gets up in an assembly and confesses that Christ is Lord, is that sufficient to save him? No! He becomes a "professing Christian" but not necessarily a "possesing Christian".

If a person receives Christ into his heart and dies before he has the opportunity to make a public profession, does that bar him from heaven? We think not! What is the point then? The point is that the two must go together. For a person to (allegedly) receive Christ into his heart and yet refuse to make a public confession of it (when there is opportunity) is as contrary to Christianity as is "faith without works". There must be something wrong with a heart condition that does not lead to the action of confession.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach and unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good news?"

Verses 14 and 15

Paul's message here is quite clear. It puts to rest the claim made by some who claim that a loving God would not condemn the heathen in Africa when they have had no opportunity to hear the Gospel. Paul say that there is no way they can be saved without first hearing the message.

There are several terms in the above passage, however, that we would like to amplify. Paul says that they can not hear without a "preacher". So, you say, I'm not a preacher so this passage does not apply to me. The Greek term here is not a technical term for a person who is the pastor of a church (i.e. a "preacher"). The word is {kerusso}. We find this word in the following:

Instead, he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. [Mark 11:45]

This is the account of the leper who Jesus healed and, he was so excited about being healed, he did as noted above. He was not a "preacher", he simply went about the city like a town crier and told everyone what had been done for him. He had no training. He had no office. He had no specific call to do this. He did it out of gratitude for what Christ had done for him. The word simply means to serve as a "herald". Hence, the word can apply to you and I as well as the "preacher".

Then we look at the point that they must be "sent". The word here is {apostello} which may be recognized as the root of the term "apostle". Again, this does not, in any way, imply that one must be an "apostle" to be sent out. What does the verb mean? there are other verbs which also mean to "send". What is the significane of this one? Let's begin with a technical description:

It is more sharply accentuated in relation to the consciousness of a goalk or to effort toward its attainment, There is also a significant difference from {pempain}. In the latter the point is sending as such, i.e. the fact of sending ... Apostello, however, expresses the fact that the sending takes place from a specific and unique standpoint which does not merely link the sender and the receipient but also, in virtue of the situation, unites with the sender either the person or the object sent.

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What this means, in simple terms, is that it is not just a simple "hey, why don't you go!" but a formal commissioning of one to take the message and a commitment of the part of those who do the "sending" to be concerned with the work. Hence:

"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them". So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:2,3

Interestingly enough, the word "apostello" is not used in this passage although it illustrates the concept. The word used here is {apoluo} which means "to set free". This is the other side of the coin. If you wish to send someone out who is really committed to the Lord and thus will be used of the Lord in the spreading of the Gospel, you will have to "cut loose" of the person who is contributing much to your own Christian walk. In other words, don't send the person is is expendable!

Finally, the concept here is that, for men to be saved, we need two types of people: (1) those who are willing to go and act as heralds to proclaim the Gospel and (2) those who are willing to let them go and stand behind them and support them in the work. Then people will hear and believe and confess and be saved.

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

Verse 16

Paul again turns to Israel and its response to the Gospel. In the remaining part of this chapter, he cites from a number of Old Testament passages in support of his claim. The claim is that Israel had heard the good news but not accepted it.

The first quotation is from Isaiah:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

[Isaiah 53:1]

This introduces a very well known passage from the book. It is the passage which most dramatically prophesies the coming of Jesus Christ. The context of this verse is most informative. Following this verse is the prophecy of Christ's coming which includes how he would be rejected by Israel:

He was despised and rejected of men. ... we esteemed him not. [Isaiah 53:3]

We, like sheep, have gone astray...

[Isaiah 53:6]

and so on. Just prior to this verse, however, we have:

For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

[Isaiah 52:15]

a prophecy that, when Christ would come, the Gentiles would hear and receive the message.

You may say, well this may be true after Christ came, but what about Israel before that time? Paul goes on.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. But I ask, Did they not hear? Of course they did:

"Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."
Verses 17-18

Here Paul quotes from Psalm 19:4. Who is the "their" referred to in this verse?

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands.
[Psalm 19:1]

Paul began this epistle by noting that even nature points to the existence of God and so no man has an excuse. Israel had no excuse for they had not only nature, but God's blessings as well. (see the rest of the psalm).

Again I say, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,
"I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."
And Isaiah boldly says,
"I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me"

Verses 19-20

Paul now cites both Moses and Isaiah. First he quotes Deuteronomy 32:21. Deuteronomy 32 begins with the "Song of Moses" in which he praises God and points to Israel's unfaithfulness. He cites all the things that God has done for Israel and yet Israel rejects him. Thus he begins the last half of the song with the verse above and then describes God's judgement upon Israel for their unfaithfulness.

BUT! In Deuteronomy, Israel had only begun their unfaithfulness. There was the golden calf and the murmuring in the wilderness. There was the lack of faith when the spies returned. But Israel's real unfaithfulness came many years later than this. So, Israel had Deuteronomy 32 from which to learn and to change their ways. Israel had the message, where was the understanding?

The second quotation is from Isaiah 65. The full verse is,

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, "here am I, here am I".
[Isaiah 65:1]

The rest of the chapter then, again, deals with the fact that Israel had God's message and refused to heed it.

Paul concludes with the second verse of Isaiah 65 which is a contrast to verse 1. In verse 1, God is shown responding to those whom he had not called ...the Gentiles. But in verse 2 which he quotes, we have...

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

The Bible tells us that a 1000 years is as a day to the Lord. God "held out his hands all day" for Israel - for thousands of years God was patient with Israel, but they were, according to the words, disobedient and obstinate. This conclusion then gives rise to another question which Paul will deal with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

11.01 : Verses 1 to 10 : The Remnant

I ask then, Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.

Verses 1 and 2

In the last chapter we have seen that Israel, as a nation, rejected God and the means of salvation. So Paul asks, in effect, whose fault is it? Was it God that rejected them? In fact, did God reject them? Has God now rejected them? Paul says, emphatically, No! In this passage he gives some of his personal testimony. Why do you suppose he does this?

Paul, being a very good Israelite, is well qualified to speak of the relationship between God and Israel. It is not as if you or I were to attempt such a disclosure. But the, what evidence does Paul have that what he says is true? He gives us this evidence.

Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah - how he appealed to God against Israel: "Lord they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me.?"

Verses 2 and 3

As proof of what he has said, Paul refers to 1 Kings 19. In verses 1-8, Elisha becomes very bitter and wishes to die because of the way Israel has forsaken God and, especially, because his own life has been threatened. But God had other plans and provided him food for nourishment and then sent him to mount Horeb, a 40 day journey (the number of testing).

At Horeb God questions Elijah what is wrong and Elijah makes the statement quoted above by Paul (Verse 14). Then the Lord shows Elijah four things: (1) A Powerful Wind, (2) An Earthquake, (3) A Fire, and (4) a Gentle Whisper (KJV="a Still Small Voice"). It was in the latter that God spoke to Elijah. In this "still small voice", he again asked Elijah what he was doing there and the answer was the same (Verse 14).

What is the meaning of this? God can speak in any or all of the first three items in the list. But these are all connected with judgement. (see, for example, Rev. 8:5). But, at that time God was not rendering judgement. Rather he was speaking softly to Elijah. Why so?

And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Verse 4

In spite of the gloom that Elijah perceived, God saw that there were in Israel, some who were faithful and so would be spared. Elijah dispared and would have wiped out all of Israel if he could -but not God. God spared 7000. So Paul goes on with...

So to, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

11.02 : Verses 11 to 26 : Ingrafted Branches

Again I ask, "Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because

of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring? Verses 11-12

Paul began the last section with the question as to whether God rejected his people and we found the answer to be "no!". The question is asked "again" in another way ("again" is not in the Greek text here). Paul asks, this time, if they fell so far that there is no possibility of recovery?

The NIV has "fall beyond recovery" while the KJV has only "fall" as does the NAS. Where does "beyond recovery" come from? This comes not from the meaning of the word "fall" which is {pipto} in the Greek, but rather from the meaning of the word "stumble" which is {ptaio}. It is found in the following passages:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking it all.

[James 2:10]

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man.

[James 3:2]

In the first case, "stumbling" does not mean what we take it to mean today, that is, to strike one's foot against something and to "stagger a bit" while we regain our footing. Rather it means to lose it completely and fall. It has the same meaning in the second verse, but what is not obvious is that the word is found twice in the second verse. The second time it is translated "at fault" (the KJV has "offend"). This carries the idea of actually falling still further. Then we have...

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you will never fall,...

[2 Peter 1:10]

where the word is translated "fall". Finally, we have...

To him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you before his glorious presence without fault...

[Jude 1:24]

where the word has an alpha in front of it "not falling". The point is the word itself means "to fall" (to fall by stumbling?). So then we have in our passage, "Did they fall that they might fall?" Since the word itself means, itself, "to fall", the latter word must be taken in an absolute sense, "to fall without hope of getting back up", "to fall or fail completely".

Paul, in this section will undertake to answer this question, but first he considers why God let them stumble in the first place. He says that the reason (at least one reason) for their stumbling is that salvation might be brought to the gentiles.

Paul then makes a very curious statement. Why did God bring the Gospel message to you and me (to the gentiles)? Paul says that the reason is to make Israel jealous! We saw this in verse 19 of the last chapter.

Next he sets up two equations:

Israel's "trespass" = riches for "cosmos"
Israel's "shortfall" = riches for "nations"

Again Paul asks (basically) the same question. Do you suppose that Paul knows what he is saying? Read Revelation, chapter 7, in connection with Paul's claim. There we have record of 144000 Jews who God will raise in in the time of the tribulation. For what purpose?

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language... "who are they, and where did they come from?" ... These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [Revelation 7:9,13,14]

Continuing on...

If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

In 1 Corinthians we have...

Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast.
[1 Corinthians 5:6-7]

Here Paul puts it the other way around. If the part of the dough offered to the Lord as the first fruits is holy, the whole lump is holy. Here the "lump" is Israel and the "first fruits" represents the patriarchs. It might be interesting to note that "first fruits" here is from {aparche} which means, literally "from the top" or "from the head" and has as its basis the same word from which we get "patriarch" or "head father".

"Holy" here must be taken, not in the sense of "sinless" but in the original sense of the word "set apart" or, hence "sanctified". Since God set aside for himself the leaders of the Hebrew nation, the whole nation is set apart unto himself.

Paul switches to another metaphor, that of a root and branches. This sounds kind of like a metaphor Jesus used,

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.
[John 15:5]

But, there is a difference. The difference is that ROOT is not VINE and the BRANCHES are not the same. We shall comment on this difference later. For now, the root is, again Israel's patriarchs and, especially, Abraham (since root is here singular).

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches.
Verses 17,18

Paul expands upon the later metaphor. We commented on the difference between this and John 15. There it was a GRAPE vine, here we see that it is an OLIVE tree. Paul speaks of some of the branches being broken off and this refers, of course, to those of Israel who have rejected God and were cut off. There is a play on words here that is not seen in the English. "Branch" is from {klados} which is derived from the verb {klao} which means "to break" (such as "to break bread"). A "branch" then is that which is "a young tender shoot broken off for the sake of grafting" (Thayer). The verb here "broken off" is from the same verb but with a prefix means "out" or "away" and hence to be separated by breaking.

When you consider this play on words, Paul is saying that most of Israel turned from being "young tender shoots suitable for grafting" to old shoots which must be removed. There is, then an obvious contrast intended.

Perhaps, when Paul wrote this, he had in mind the words of Jeremiah,

The Lord called you a thriving olive tree with fruit beautiful in form. But with a roar of a mighty storm he will set it on fire, and its branches will be broken off. [Jeremiah 11:16]

With the bringing of the Gospel to the Gentiles, we have had the opportunity to be grafted into this root. Note that Paul says that we are "wild olive shoots". The word is {agrielaos} - what does it mean? Consider the following:

We have three words in the Greek for "olive tree", all of which are used in this passage. In Revelation 11:4 we have:

There are the two olive trees ...
[Revelation 11:4]

The word is {elaia}, simply "olive" or "olive tree". It is often found in the New Testament in connection with the Mount of "Olives". It is the word for olive without any distinction to type. When we reach verse 24, we will have reference to...

...a cultivated olive tree (NIV) or a good olive tree (KJV)

Here the word is {kallielia} and means, literally, "good olive tree". It refers to the "garden or cultivated olive tree". So, now, the word we have here has the prefix "agri" which may be recognized in our word "agriculture", the "tilling of the field". Paul refers to us, then, as belonging to the "field olive tree" or, in other words, the tree that grows, uncultivated, in the natural state, hence "wild olive". The picture is very graphic since it was Israel that was invited into God's "garden" and we were left "out in the cold". We, who were "once far off" have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree.

Finally, Paul says we share in the "nourishing sap" {poites} of the tree. Perhaps he had in mind the following...

But the olive tree replied, "Should I give up my oil, by which both good and men are honored...?"
[Judges 9:9]

We might make note of one other reference where {poites} is to be found,

Again I asked him "Who are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand" ... "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" .. So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."
[Zechariah 4:11-14]

Here "anointed" (in the LXX) is the same word, the "nourished ones" or "sons of fatness". To make a long story short, as branches grafted into the root, we share in God's "fatness", in God's blessings.

do not boast over these branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root but the root supports you. You say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be

grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand in faith. Do not be arrogant but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Verses 18-21

from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.
[1 John 3:21-22]

Here the word us {arestos} (with no prefix). It means just what it translates to, "to please". In our passage, the word has the prefix {eu} which makes it "well pleasing". Paul gives us many examples of what "well pleasing" is.

Live as children of light... and find out what pleases the Lord. [Ephesians 5:8,10]

So, first, we are to seek out what it is that pleases him. Then we are to seek this,

So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

[2 Corinthians 5:9]

Then we have some examples, providing for and praying for missionaries,

I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

[Philippians 4:18]

Being obedient to those God has placed over us for our care,

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. [Colossians 3:20]

And, finally, in Hebrews we have,

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Hebrews 13:20-21]

We have that the perfect way to please God is to present him our bodies so that He can work through us and so what it is that pleases himself.

Finally, in verse 1, Paul writes "which is your spiritual worship". The KJV has "which is your reasonable service". The Greek is {logiken} {latreian}. The first word is the source of our word "logical". The word is only found, besides this, in

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk...
[1 Peter 2:2]

Where it is translated "spiritual" (KJV has "of the word"). Without getting technical here, let us conclude the the word means "the logical result of a spiritual condition". "Service" is a literal translation of the Greek word, but the word means "spiritual service". Paul is concluding by saying that, if you have truly rendered your soul to Christ, the logical outworking of that condition is that you will perform spiritual service to God in your body. You will put action to your faith.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing

of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Verses 2 and 3

Paul continues with the advise. In the English we have an interesting play on words "Do not CONFORM but be TRANSFORMED". This parallel is not in the Greek, however. "Conform" is from a large Greek word {suschematizomai} which is only to be found here and in,

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

[1 Peter 1:14]

Wuest translates this, "Stop masquerading, in the habiliments of this world, its mannerisms, speech expression, styles, habits." Robertson says "Do not take this age as your fashion plate." Perhaps Phillips puts it most plainly, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold."

"Transformed" is {metamorphomai}, the word from which we get "metemorphoses". It is used in the Gospels of Jesus,

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were alone. There he was transfigured before them.

[Mark 9:2]

Paul tells us about this transformation in,

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

[2 Corinthians 3:18]

The transform takes place as our mind is renewed (an accurate translation of the Greek). With our minds we must put off the things that once filled our mind and refill it with spiritual things.

Having done this, Paul tells us what the outcome will be. He says that we will be able to determine what God's will is. He uses the terms "good", "pleasing" and "perfect". "Pleasing" is the same word we have in verse 1, "well pleasing". We might be tempted to translate these terms as "good", "better" and "best".

Perhaps Paul had a reason for this succession of terms. As we renew our minds we first learn God's "good" will. As we grow in Him, we learn more specific and find that which is "better" (well pleasing) and, finally, we reach the point where we see God's "best" (perfect) will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Verse 3

In this verse we have the Greek word {phroneo} four times (in various forms). It refers to the mind and means "to have an opinion", "to have understanding" or, hence "to think". We have {hyperphroneo} "to think highly" or "to be high minded" and {sophroneo} "to be sound minded" or "to think soberly". Paul says that we should work at keeping our thoughts "sound" rather than "high". There are those today who ought to heed this advice. There are some preachers who ought to heed this advice as they give, Sunday after Sunday, lofty sounding sermons which are devoid of any real Biblical truth. But it is not limited only to preachers. Lay people also fall into this trap.

Paul speaks of "the measure of faith" God has given us. "Measure" here comes from {metros} which doesn't take much imagination to translate. Paul says that some have a greater measure of faith than others. But, whatever your measure of faith is, you ought not to get ahead of yourself and think of yourself higher than you are.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Verses 4 and 5

In verse one Paul asked us to present our "bodies" as living sacrifices. He now turns back to our body and points out that our bodies are made of of many "members". "Members" {melos} of the body are mentioned elsewhere. James writes,

Likewise the tongue is a small part (member) of the body, but it makes great boasts.
[James3:5]

Paul makes the same sort of observations in Corinthians,

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. [1 Corinthians 12:12]

(See verses 12-31). Just look at yourself in the mirror and see all of your various parts. Some parts are very needed, some are not. Some of us have more of one part than we need. But Paul says that each of these parts have different functions. "Functions" is from {praxis} which is the title of the book of "Acts". We might make use of this parallel and note that just as the different apostles had different ministries, they all made up the body of Christ. Just so, the various members of our bodies have different functions, but all are for the operation of the body as a whole.

Paul furthers this thought by saying that we, as members of Christ's body must belong to each other. What does this mean? Let us go on and answer this question.

We have different gifts, according to the grace that is given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him prophesy. Let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is in serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Verses 6-8

Paul now enumerates some of the functions that the members of the body are given to perform. Note that others are mentioned in 1 Corinthians and that Paul is certainly not listing all of these.

"Gifts" here is not a Greek word for gift, but {charismata}, a derivative of the Greek word for "grace". But "grace" itself is a gift - unmerited favor and so then also the things that God gives us through his grace are gifts. They are referred to as "spiritual gifts" in 1 Corinthians were, again, "gifts" are not mentioned but "spiritual (gifts)".

Let us take a moment and look at the list of these gifts here.

Prophecy, Service, Teaching,
Encouragement, Giving, Leadership,
Showing Mercy.

Paul lists these in strange order. We would have put prophecy, teaching and leadership as the first items on the list. Paul puts some things on the list that we might not have put

there at all. Let us look at these.

"Prophecy" is {prophereo}, literally, "to speak before". It means, simply, to speak God's word before others. While there are those who God has gifted to be great orators, Paul says that we are to exercise these gifts in accordance with the grace given us. So you are not a great orator, God does not therefore expect you to be one. But you can speak to others about God's plans with what ability God has given you.

"Service" is {diakaneo} from which we get "deacon". God has called some to be "deacons" and "deaconesses". but God has given many the ability to "serve" in one capacity or another. The word is a general word for service.

"Teaching" is {didaskaleo}. Some have been called to be "teachers" but others can, in what measure God has given them ability, "tutor" their friends in the way of Christianity.

"Encouragement" is {parakaleo}, a word which we have spent some time on in this lesson already. It means to come along side of another in order to help them. Perhaps you never thought of that as being a "spiritual gift" before, but Paul here lists it with all these other gifts. Have you ever thought that your place in the body of Christ is just encouraging others. Maybe you have been upset because you don't have any "office" in the church but, have you been an encouragement to others? If so, you already have an "office" in the church.

"Contributing" is {metadidomai}. Luke uses this same word in, "The man who has two tunics should share with the one who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." [Luke 3:11]

and Paul writes,

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. [Ephesians 4:26]

Maybe you never thought of "giving" as a service to which the Lord may have called you. Maybe you never thought of putting in time with the "ladies craft group" as being a spiritual service, but the above passage says just that! But to this Paul adds, "with simplicity" (KJV) or "with liberality" (NAS) or "generously" (NIV). The term really means to give in sincerity. It means give because this is the gift that God has given you to exercise, not so that others may see what a great giver you are!

"Leadership" is {prohistomai} which means, literally, "to stand before". It speaks of those who are not afraid to take the lead and show others the way. This person should do so "diligently". He should stick with it.

"Show Mercy" is {eleon}. The word is almost always used in the New Testament with reference to God's showing us mercy. But one of the "acts" of the body is for us to, in turn, show mercy to others and to do so joyously. We are to do with because we feel good about helping and having compassion on others, not because we feel it is something we are "supposed" to do.

12.02 : Verses 9 to 21 : Love

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Verse 9

In this one verse we have three statements. Let us begin with the second which is an admonition to "Hate". The Bible often tells us that we are to "love", but here we are told to hate.

"Hate" is "Abhor" in the KJV and NAS. While "abhor" is probably closer in meaning to the Greek, it is not hard to see why the NIV has "hate". Who, today, really knows what "abhor" means (without consulting a dictionary)? The Greek word is {apostugeo} and is found only here in the Bible. We have,

... We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. [Titus 3:3]

Here the word has the prefix {apo} which generally means "away from" and so we might translate the word "shunning what is hated". For this reason, Phillips paraphrases it "Let us have a genuine break with evil". I believe that the import of the word is that we are to recognize what is evil and, having recognized it, have nothing more to do with it - a passive "hate". It does not mean that we are to start a campaign against it, as some have done, and to thus let the "hatred" of it rob us of a glorious life.

Turning to the other side of the coin, we have "cling to what is good". The Greek word here is {kollao} and is the basis of our English word "Colloid", a term for substances like Jello. The English word refers to things which are held together in some sort of medium (water). The root of the word means "glue". Wuest paraphrases this as "stick like glue to that which is good". Only Luke and Paul use this word in the New Testament. Paul uses it again in,

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? ... But who who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

[1 Corinthians 6:16,17]

I like the concept of the "Colloid" for it implies that you and I as Christians ought to be bound together, with the medium being the Holy Spirit, with that which is good.

When we practice these two things, what is accomplished? Paul says "Love must be sincere". To have a sincere love, we must accomplish these two actions. "Sincere" here is {anupokritos}, a literal translation of which is "unhypocritical". The root of this word is used of an actor who "says the words of another" or, in other words, pretends to be another person". Thus, our love must be our own love and thus genuine. We must not pretend to love things that we really do not care for.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Verse 2

Paul gives us two other recipes for unpretentious love. The first is "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love". The Greek is much more descriptive. In this phrase there are two Greek words for love or affection, {philadelphos} and {philostorgos}. The first is, literally, "love of brothers" and the second is "love of family". We might paraphrase Paul's words here as "Love your brothers (in the faith) as if they were members of your own family". This makes a lot of sense. In addition, Paul may have also been shaming them slightly. Is not a "brother", by definition, a "member of the family"? Paul is pointing out to you and me that, since we are all part of the Family of God, we are all brothers (and sisters) and hence need to love each other in this relational sense.

The second point is "Honor one another above yourselves". What does this mean to us? The NAS says "give preference to one another in honor". The word "preference is {proegaomai} which is used only here in the NT. In the O.T. we have,

...they shall appoint generals of the army to be leaders if the people. [Deuteronomy 20:9]

Giving freedom to speak is the beginning of righteousness, but the forerunners of poverty are sedition and strife. [Proverbs 17:14 LXX]

In both of these cases the word refers to that which goes before others. Paul says, then, that we should honor others before we consider any honor of our own. Phillips says we should "have a willingness to give others the credit".

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Verse 11

Next Paul indicates the manner we are to "serve the Lord". The way we are to do this, according to Paul, is with "a burning spirit". The word is {zeo} which means, literally, to boil with heat, to be hot. One might use a modern day term and say that we are to be "on fire for the Lord." How are we to do this? Paul gives us two words of contrast. We are to do it with "zeal" and not "lacking" or, to use the words of the NAS, with "diligence" and not "lagging behind". The words are {spoude} and {okneros}. The first word means "to make haste" or "to be diligent" (depending on the context). Which does it mean here? Let's look at the other word.

The second word means "to be slow" or "to delay". We might, thus, contrast these two words, we are to be "fast", not "slow". We are to "make haste", not "dilly dally". One needs to be careful, however, since we are told (by some sage) the "haste makes waste". But haste here does not refer to that kind of thing. We are to make good use of our time and not to squander it. We think of the proverb,

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - and poverty will come upon you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

[Proverbs 6:6-11]

"sluggard" is used twice in the above passage and is the translation of the word we are considering.

To conclude, to be "on fire for the Lord" in our spirits, we can't be sluggards but must make good use of our time.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Verse 12

Next is Paul's recipe for joyous Christian living. He says that we are to be joyful. How are we to do this? Paul gives us the two factors related to this.

First, he says to be "patient in affliction". How can a Christian be joyful when he is suffering {thlipsis}, "tribulation" or "affliction". The verb {thlibo} has an interesting meaning. We have,

Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. [Mark 3:9]

But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only few find it. [Matthew 7:14]

The word means "to press upon" and can be used in a literal sense of pressing grapes. In the above verses, it speaks of people pressing against another, or buildings pressing in on a street so as to narrow it down. How, then, can we be joyful with all of the pressure of modern day life?

Paul says we must be "patient". The word is {hupomeneo} and is a compound, the root of which simply means "to abide" or "to dwell" or, hence "to continue". The prefix means "under" and hence "to dwell under (something)". What does this mean? It means, simply, that we must learn "to live under" the pressures of daily living. We must understand that this is "par" for the course and that God is aware of our position and is allowing it to exist.

Then Paul says that we are to be "faithful in prayer". First, there are various words for prayer in the Greek. This one {preseuke}, for the sake of this discussion, refers to formal prayers to God. Our actions with respect to such prayers are to be {proskarterountes}. It means "to be steadfast toward (a thing)". It is interesting to note that almost all occurrences of this word in the N.T. are relative to PRAYER! To be specific...

They all joined together constantly in prayer... [Acts 1:14]

The devoted themselves to ... prayer. [Acts 2:42]

Every day the continued to meet together in the temple courts ... praising God... [Acts 2:46]

We will turn this responsibility over to them and give our attention to prayer... [Acts 6:3,4]

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message... [Colossians 4:2,3]

What happens when we put this all together? First, we will be put under many pressures in this life, no doubt about it. But we are to learn to live under pressure. How can we do so? By being consistent in prayer, praying for our needs and the needs of our brothers. By doing so, we will gain hope and that is what leads to a joyous Christian life.

Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Verse 13

Now, having told us how to have joy ourselves, he tells us how to help others to have joy. He says that we should "share with God's people who are in need." The KJV has "Distributing to the needs of the saints". "Saints" is an accurate translation of {hagios} but we don't often think of ourselves as "saints" and so the translation "God's people".

"Needs" here is {chreia} which speaks of that which is "necessary". There is a difference between what people often "want" and what they really "need". Paul does not say that we are to "give" to those who have these needs. No! He says that we are to "share" with them. Is there a difference?

"Share" is {koinoneo}, related to the noun {koinonia} "fellowship". It might be instructive to look at other instances of this verb.

For ... the Gentiles have shared in the Jew's spiritual blessings... [Romans 15:27]

Anyone who receives good instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

[Galatians 6:6]

giving and receiving, except you only.

[Philippians 4:15]

We note, most specifically, the last verse in which the "sharing" is in regards to, not only giving, but receiving also! When you look at it, all three verses have this sense. In Galatians, both the teacher and the pupil are to benefit from their sharing. In the first verse, both the Jews and the Gentiles benefited from sharing the blessings of the Gospel. Both Paul and the Philippians benefited from their common sharing.

Paul says we are to share with fellow Christians who have needs. But this "sharing" is not just "giving", it is both "giving" and "receiving" as well. There is to be a mutual benefit from such a sharing.

In addition, Paul says we are to "practice hospitality". The Greeks had a word for "being hospitable", it is {philoxenia} which is, literally, "love for strangers". We find the word {xenos} in...

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me...

[Matthew 25:35-37]

The word has the prefix {philos} which we have seen in other words in this section. The "love for strangers" is a trait that Elders are supposed to possess,

Now the overseer must be ... hospitable...

[1 Timothy 3:2]

[Titus 1:8]

But, in addition, both Peter and the author of Hebrews indicate that we must all be hospitable,

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. [1 Peter 4:8-9]

Keep loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have entertained angels without knowing it.

[Hebrews 13:1-2]

Paul writes that we are not only to be hospitable, but that we are to "practice" it. The word is {dioko} and it means, literally, "to run swiftly (in order to catch something)". It is often used for the Jews "persecuting" Jesus and also of Paul. Paul uses this same word in...

... I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. [Philippian 3:12]

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

[Philippians 3:14]

What is the bottom line of all this? We are to spread our joy to others by sharing with them where they have needs. We are to do this by, as our goal, being hospitable to them.

(to be continued).

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Verse 14

Paul has instructed us about our own attitudes, to be joyful, and to work at make others joyful also. Now he turns to our attitudes toward another group of people, those who persecute us. "Persecute" is the same word we had in verse 12 when Paul told us to "pursue" hospitality. We might say, then, that Paul is speaking about those who pursue "inhospitality".

What are we to do with people who make it a point to give us a bad time? Paul gives us the alternatives: to "Bless them" or "to curse them". James uses the same two terms when we writes,

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.

[James 3:9,10]

What "cursing" means may be seen in the following passage,

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from its roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The tree you cursed has withered."

[Mark 11:20-21]

It means, then, to utter a prayer that the person or thing would die or be put down, In a milder sense, it means to wish ill-will upon a person. In this sense, it is just the opposite of "bless" and we have,

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you...

[Luke 6:27-28]

So, then, we are supposed to "bless" them. We ask God to bless us. We ask God to bless others. How do WE bless anyone? The word is {eulogeo} and may be transliterated as "eulogize". Literally, it means "to speak well". I really don't think Paul meant that we are to "bless" others in the sense we take the word "bless" but rather that we are to speak "well" of them, that we are to be positive in what we say about them rather than negative.

Is it possible to say good things about such a person? There are few people on the face of this earth that do not have some characteristics that we can speak well of; we simply need to seek out what these might be. But, why should we do so? The Bible says we should do so and we might say that that ought to be sufficient reason!

But, I don't believe God would have us do something without a reason and what is it? Does God want us to elevate this other person in the eyes of our friends and associates? I doubt it. I rather suspect that the reason is to elevate ourselves in the eyes of others and in the sight of God. The passage we looked at in Luke ends up with the words...

But love your enemies. do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be the sons of the Most High...

[Luke 6:35]

If we do as the Lord asks, we will be rewarded from the Lord. In addition, if we carry on like the ones who are persecuting us, we will be no better in the eyes of others than they are. If, on the other hand, our conduct is much superior to theirs, others will see something

in us, Jesus Christ, that they do not see in the others.

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Verse 15

Here Paul gives us to other ways in which we should conduct our lives. These are "rejoicing" and "mourning". For mourning the KJV has "weeping" as does the NAS. The reason for "mourning" in the NIV is that the Greek has a number of words that mean "to cry" or "to weep". For example, we have {stenazo} in...

...but we ourselves ... groan inwardly as we wait...
[Romans 8:23]

which means to cry or weep or groan (i.e. to make inarticulate sounds). Then we have {odunee} which means to cry "formally" in public, such as...

A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning
[Matthew 2:18]

and we have {alaleto} which is an oriental form of mourning...

Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly... [Mark 5:38]

and we have {dakruo} which means to cry silently. The most famous example of this is...

Jesus wept. [John 11:35]

But Jesus wept on several occasions. This was we he observed the mourning of Lazarus. But we also have...

As he approached Jerusalem, and saw the city, he wept over it. [Luke 19:41]

This last verse uses {klaio} which means to weep out loud so that others may hear and, thus it means to "mourn" (by so weeping).

Now, why so much fuss about what the word means? If we are to interpret Paul's advice, we must know what he is telling us. He is not telling us that we are to go and cry with those who are sad. He is not telling us to go and cry with those who are crying in silence by themselves. The fact of the matter is that sometimes, when we are sorrowing, we need space; we need time alone when we can let down and let our sorrows out.

What Paul is telling us then is that we are to go and "cry" with those whose sorrowing requires companionship. While there are times when we need to be alone in our sorrow, there are also times when we need the comfort of others.

Paul, then is not only telling us to comfort those who need comfort, but that we need to be careful to do it tactfully, when the person needs our comfort.

The other side of the coin is that we are to rejoice with those who are rejoicing. What is Paul telling us here? We already consider the word "rejoice" in verse 12 ("joyful"). What is Paul telling us? Consider an example! Suppose a man receives the Lord as his Savior and stands up in church and expresses his joy at having been saved. What is our responsibility. Do we simply think to ourselves "that's nice" and go on our way, or do we

express our joy in knowing that this man is saved. Do we share with him in his joy? Perhaps this is a rhetorical question. What would happen to this mans new found joy in no one else rejoices with him?

The bottom line is that people not only need others to "comfort" them in times of sorrow by having them "weep" with them, but they also need "comfort" in times of gladness by having others share with them in their "rejoicing"

Live in harmony with one another. Don't be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low degree. Don't be conceited. Verse 16

Paul's next word of advice is that we should live in "harmony" and he then tells us how to do so. The key Greek word in this verse is {phronimos}, the Greek word for "mind" and what we do with our minds, "to think". The word, in various forms, appears three times in this verse.

Paul says we are to "live in harmony". The KJV says "Be of the same mind", a more literal translation. We shall delay discussing what this means until we have looked at the rest of the verse. In order to do this, Paul says:

- 1) Don't be proud {me ta huspsala ph..}
- 2) Be willing to associate with people of low degree
- 3) Don't be conceited {me gineske ph..}

In chapter 11, verse 20 we looked at the Greek word {hupseelophorneo} which is a compound of the two words we have here. To think "highly" of ourselves, and hence "to be proud". The third item "Don't be conceited" is literally, "do not become wise with yourself" or, in other words, don't think that you have all the answers. Phillips says "Don't become set in your own opinions".

The contrast is "be willing to associate with people of low degree". Paul speaks of our attitude regarding the {tapeinos} which is usually translated "humble". While Paul does not use the word here, he may have had in mind the compound {tapeinophrosune} as found in...

Serving the Lord with all humility of mind...
[Acts 20:19 KJV]

Here we have cite the KJV which emphasizes the fact that "mind" is attached to the word. Paul says that, with regards to people who do not have elevated opinions of themselves, or "plain" people, we are to "be willing to associate with". The KJV has "condescend". The Greek word is {sunapago}, a compound of two preposition, "with" and "away" and the verb "to lead" and hence "to lead away with" or, passively, "to be carried away with". Hence we have,

So that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. [Galatians 2:13]

Be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men...
[2 Peter 3:17]

There are the only other occurances of this word in the N.T. and in both the concept is that of being caught up with something and swept away with it. We might extend the concept to our verse and say that Paul is telling us to "be caught up with" these with humble minds. He is telling us to take such an interest in these that we forget about ourselves and hence do not become "high minded" and "ego-centric".

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the sight of everybody.
Verse 18

We need not spend a lot of time on the first part of this, it is pretty plainly put. We have, in the last verses, seen this concept, not cursing those who curse us, and so on. Paul states, in contrast to this, that we are to "Be careful to do what is right...". The KJV has "provide things honest..." while the NAS has "Respect what is right...". Phillips paraphrases it with "See that your public behaviour is above criticism". The word here is {pronoceo} and Paul uses it again in...

We want to avoid any criticism in the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men.
[2 Corinthians 8:20-21]

but the only other occurrence of the word is in...

If anyone does not provide for his relatives ... he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
[1 Timothy 8:8]

where it is translated "provide". What the word really means, literally, is "to know ahead". It means "provide" in the sense of thinking out a need before it occurs and so to be ready for it. It means, then, "to plan ahead".

In this passage, then, it means that we should think about what we are going to do and make sure that it is not only the right thing to do, but that others also will perceive it is being correct.

Putting these together, Paul says that, when someone does something to hurt us, instead of flying off the handle and throwing it back in his face, we should take time and reflect on our actions and then do what is right and proper and so as to have a good testimony in the affair before others.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Verse 18

The advice here is to "live at peace with everyone". We need not look to the Greek here for the meaning. We need not even have the advice given in this phrase. How many of us today would give our "eyeteeth" to be able to live at peace with everyone. How much of the efforts in the world today are aimed at trying to have peace.

But, look carefully to what Paul prefixes this with. He lays down two conditions: (1) if it is possible and (2) as far as it depends on you. First, Paul is not saying that it is possible to have peace with everyone. We see, occasionally, a billboard that advertises "We can have peace in our time" (or something like that). I don't know who is behind the sign, but it presupposes that it is possible to have it. Paul does not make such a claim.

Why might it not be possible? The second part is "as far as it depends on you". There's an old saying that "it takes two to make an argument". It, likewise, takes two to make peace again. You can not make peace with a person who does not wish to make peace with you. To put this another way, Paul says that if you are not at peace with anyone, make sure it is their fault and not yours.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, "It is mine to avenge, I will repay" says the Lord. On the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals of fire on his head."

Verses 19 and 20

In these two verses, Paul has some advice which is hard to follow and a comment that is somewhat surprising. First he quotes from Deuteronomy,

It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes in upon them. [Deuteronomy 32:35]

and on the basis of this, says that we are to leave vengeance to the Lord. Then he quotes from Proverbs,

If your enemy is hungry, give him to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you. [Proverbs 25:21-22]

which in a way seems to contradict this, he says that the way to get back at our enemy is to be "nice" to him. There are differing thoughts on the meaning of this later thought. Someone believes it refers to an oriental custom of carrying coals from one house to another (in a container on one's head) but we can not go along with that. There are others who take it literally (in the sense that God will do it literally). Some take it to mean that we will shame the person by so doing.

What does it really mean? First of all, Paul doesn't say that if our enemy needs a new Cadillac that we are to go and buy him one. He only refers to the absolute essentials of life. So, then, if our enemy is destitute, lacking of the essentials of life and we thus provide these two him, what is the result. It might cause him to repent and we would then lose an enemy and gain a friend. But, suppose it does not. Let us haul this man into court and judge him for his actions toward us. Had we not taken care of his essential needs, the judge might pardon him or give him a light sentence on the basis that a man will have to do most anything in order to obtain the bare necessities of life. But we took care of his necessities! Thus, when he comes to the judgement, he is without excuse. The conflict was due entirely to his attitude and in no way did our attitude have anything to do with it.

The final point is, then, that God is in control and, in the end, God will judge all of mankind. It is up to you and I to do what pleases God and, by so doing, we will receive God's rewards at that time. We need not be concerned with the rewards (positive or negative) of others for that is God's place and he will punish in a suitable way those who have afflicted us.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Verse 21

Paul ends this section with this final word of advice. "Overcome" here is {nikao} which is sometimes translated "victory". We might thus translate this, "Do not be overcome by evil but be victorious by doing good."

For everyone born of God has overcome the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

[1 John 5:3-4]

Paul, then, effectively sums up what we have learned in this section by giving us the secret to victorious Christian living. He started the section with the same advice (verse 9), that the secret is to concentrate on what is good and doing that and to stay away from evil and avoid participation in evil doings.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

14.01 : Verses 1 to 23 : Two Kinds of Christians

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgement on disputable matters.

Verse 1

Paul now gives us advice regarding how two different types of Christians ought to get along. He begins with the one who's "faith is weak". We shall consider the nature of this weakness shortly, but for now, the advice is that we should "accept" these Christians without "passing judgement of disputable matters.". What does this mean?

The KJV has "doubtful disputations" (whatever that is!). The NAS has "without passing judgement on his opinions". Phillips has "not with the idea of arguing over his scruples." As we proceed we shall see what these "scruples" are, but there is a point to be understood to begin with. Paul does not say that we are not to pass judgement on another Christian who is doing things contrary to what the Scriptures teach. We are to be discerning with regard to sound doctrine. But there are many things in our day to day walks for which there is no specific Biblical teaching and this is what Paul is here dealing with.

Let us proceed to see what Paul is thinking of specifically.

One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on the one who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Verses 2 and 3

Paul begins with this example, one which he dealt with at length with the church at Corinth. He deals with the problem in Chapter 8 of that letter and again in verses 23-33 of chapter 10. But in that epistle, he says that we should not cause the other to stumble by eating everything. Here he says we should not judge the other person.

The issue is the same in both letters, but the mental attitude is different. In Corinthians, it is the mental attitude of the weaker brother that is at issue, here it is the attitude of the stronger. And, again, we note that there is nothing specific in the Scriptures to support or refute this dietary habit.

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Verse 4

This principal seems easy to understand. If one were to draw an "Organizational Chart" for the church, Christ would be at the head and we would each be under him, but one of us would not be under another of us. In other words, we take our orders from the "boss" and not from the other workers. Phillips says "Who are you to criticise the servant of someone else, especially when that somebody else is God?"

Yes, this seems easy to understand...but! Contrast this with the following.

1) In first Corinthians 5, Paul criticizes the Corinthians for not expelling a certain man from the church. Is he not saying that they should have made a judgement on this man?

2) In Galatians Paul writes,

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.
[Galatians 6:1]

3) In Ephesians Paul writes...

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

[Ephesians 5:22]

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [Ephesians 6:1]

Slaves, obey your earthly masters...

[Ephesians 6:5]

4) In Philippians Paul writes,

Each of you should look not only to your own interests; but also to the interests of others.

[Philippians 2:4]

5) In First Thessalonians Paul writes,

And we urge you brothers, warn those who are idle...

[1 Thessalonians 5:14]

6) In Second Thessalonians Paul writes,

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him in order that he may feel ashamed.

[2 Thessalonians 3:14]

7) In First Timothy Paul writes,

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. [1 Timothy 5:1]

In all of these passages, Paul is saying that we should correct another person who is not living as he ought to live. Are these instructions contrary to what Paul is teaching here?

Some points are in order. In some of these passages Paul is speaking about a person who is doing things expressly prohibited in the Scriptures. These are not contradictions since, in this chapter, Paul is speaking about spiritual matters that are a matter of interpretation (i.e. not expressly dealt with in the Scriptures). If you consider all of these exhortations, they do not use the word "judge" although it is certainly necessary to judge a person in order to know that he needs help. We are to judge that they need help and then help them. We are not to judge in the sense of condemning another person for their actions.

Finally, it is to be noted that sometimes there is a fine line that divides these two actions. Is it always possible to help a person without giving the impression that we are judging him?

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Verse 5

Paul moves on to a second example. Is it correct that we worship on Sunday? Are the Seventh Day Adventists wrong because they worship on Saturday? Is the person who works on Sunday wrong?

Paul states that each of these person should be "fully convinced in his own mind". The word is {plerophoreo} which means, literally, "to bear fully". With regards to the mind, it means to think a matter all the way through - to consider all of the ramifications. This, by the way, is a thing which many today fail to do. Men today seem to see some problem and immediately take a stand on solving that problem without first determining whether the solution they propose might be worse than the problem!

The person who decides all days are alike, for example, and therefore it is alright for him to work on Sunday, must really think out this position. Does he really believe this, or is he just using this as an excuse? For the person who worships on Saturday, is he really convinced that Saturday is the day to be worshipping or is he just trying to "be different"?

He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord, and gives thanks to God.

Verse 6

If, after giving his decision careful and thorough thought, a person believes that he is doing what the Lord wishes him to do, then he should do it. He, by doing so, is fulfilling the Lord's desire for him. According to Paul, the one who eats meat can give thanks to the Lord for giving him the meat to eat. The one who abstains from meat can give the Lord thanks for giving him the ability to so abstain.

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die; we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. Verses 7 to 9

Paul, in another place, said "to live is Christ and to die is gain!". When we see another person conduct himself differently than we do, we are to remember that what he does, he does not do alone. Whatever he does, the Lord Jesus Christ is with him. When we die, we shall be with him and a more full sense and so we shall never be apart from God.

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we all stand before God's judgement seat.
verse 10

Note what Paul does not ask here. He does not ask if you judge or look down on your brother. He asks why you DO! How does he know that you do such things? He knows because it is part of our natures to do so. Consider the following...

Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonika... Alexander the metal worker did me great harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. [2 Timothy 4:10,14]

Paul asks why we judge our brother. Did he judge Alexander? He asks why we look down on our brother. Did he look down on Demas? We might say that these men were not really "brothers" and perhaps they were not. But, then, can we ever really be sure about the salvation of another?

With regard to Paul's words here, we note that the verbs are in the present tense. "Why are you presently..." "Why do you continue to...". We have already spoken about "judging". He adds here "looking down". Perhaps this translation is not quite strong enough for {exoutheneo} which is a compound meaning "to make out to be nothing" or "to make

nothing". Perhaps we should translate this by saying "Why do you keep putting your brother down so?" Phillips says "Why try to make him look small?"

But didn't Paul do this to several people? Note, first of all, what Paul does NOT say. He doesn't say to "stop judging your brother". He asks why we are doing it? We need to, in one sense, judge a brother to see if he needs help. If a brother is doing something that is a bad example for others, we need to make it clear to others that his example is not to be followed. But, the point is that Paul is asking for our motives.

Why do we judge others? Why do we put others down? Is it not to elevate ourselves? Is it not to ease our conscience? We need not judge others in a negative sense. Why? Because God is going to judge all. We need not do his work for him.

It is written: "'As I live' says the Lord, 'Every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God'" So then let each of us give an account of himself to God.

Verses 11 and 12

We need not be overly concerned about our fellow brothers in the Lord - we need to be concerned about ourselves and be able to give a good account of ourselves to the Lord.

Therefore, let us stop passing judgement on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Verse 13

Again, Paul does not suggest that we might be passing judgement, rather he suggests that WE stop it. Not the first person plural - he includes himself in this. He says we are not to put either of two things in our brother's way

- 1) a stumbling block {proskoma}
- 2) an obstacle {skandolon}

Both of these terms we have seen earlier in this book (Romans 9:32-33). Paul uses an interesting play on words which is not recorded in the NIV. He uses the word "judge" twice, as found in the KJV. Phillips keeps the spirit of the usage when he writes
Let us therefore stop turning critical eyes on one another. If we must be critical, let us be critical of our own conduct and see that we do nothing to make a brother stumble or fall.

15.01 : Verses 14 to 22 : Paul's Fresh Ground

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

Verse 14

As Paul begins to conclude this letter, he states that he is convinced about three things regarding those at Rome. These are:

- 1) Full of Goodness
- 2) Complete in Knowledge
- 3) Competent in Instruction

First there is goodness. As we accept Jesus Christ as our savior, we become "new creations" and hence can be filled with "goodness". Using this as a foundation, and with the Word that we have been given, we can become complete in knowledge. With these two steps, we become able to help one another. The previous two lessons have dealt with our relationship with the weaker (or stronger, as the case may be) brother. Our position is that we should be able to instruct one another so that all become "complete in knowledge". To accomplish this end, we must first be filled with goodness and we must also be complete in our own knowledge. Phillips paraphrases this with "you have real Christian character and experience and are capable of helping each other on the right road."

I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, ...

Verse 15

Paul, in a sense, practices what he preaches here. If we see a weaker brother who needs correction, how do we approach such a person? Paul himself is quite diplomatic here. Phillips has "I have written to you with certain frankness, to refresh your minds with truths that you already know." Maybe they really did not "already know" these truths ... perhaps this is the first time they have really heard of them. But Paul gives all the benefit of the doubt and puts it that he is simply "reminding them."

... because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become and offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Verses 15, 16

The words of verse 16 ("minister" and "priestly duty") are Old Testament words. Paul is painting a picture of his duty as if an Old Testament priest who brought a sweet offering to the Lord at the altar. Here, the "offering" is the Gentile church to whom he was commissioned to bring the Gospel. As Paul poured out his life to bring the Gentiles into God's salvation, the Gentile church became his sweet offering to God.

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done -

by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the spirit. Verses 17-19

Lest Paul sound rather boastful here, let us see what he really is saying. First, he does boast about what he has accomplished in his service to the Lord. But, he glories "in Christ". He gives Christ the credit and his "boasting" is that Christ did this through him.

Phillips puts the next part more clearly, "I am not competent to speak of the work Christ

has done through others, but I do know that through me he has secured the obedience of the Gentiles in word and deed."

So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

Verse 19

Illyricum is now Yugoslavia and Albania. Starting at Jerusalem, Paul had taken the Gospel along the Mediterranean sea all the way up to, but not including, Italy (and Rome). In all of these regions, Paul "fully proclaimed" the Gospel.

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written, "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."

Verses 20-21

What is wrong with building on another's foundation? Paul writes

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

[1 Corinthians 3:6]

Apparently there is nothing wrong as long as you are "Apollos" who does the watering. There are differing ministries given to God's people, some do the planting, some do the watering. Paul's ministry was a church planting ministry. He broke new ground where he went to bring the Gospel. Others would follow. His ministry was to bring the Gospel where it had never been heard.

15.03 : Verses 22 to 33 : Paul's Plans

This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain.

Verses 22-24

Paul writes that he was hindered in going to Rome. He said,

"I must visit Rome also" [Acts 19:21]

so, it was not a passing fancy, but Paul had long desired to go to Rome. But, he was "hindered". The word {enghkopto} means literally, "to cut into", and hence to cut across one's path to prevent him from continuing. On several occasions in Paul's ministry we find that he was prevented from going one place or another. The important point here is that, contrary to what one might think from the verses prior to this, Paul's desire to reach fresh ground was not based on his own ambitions, but on the desires placed there by God. He wanted to see Rome, but God had put the urgent desire in his heart to cover fresh ground.

Paul has now covered all of the territory between Jerusalem and Rome (excluding Rome) and there was no more fresh ground there. He had to continue on. Here he says that he will go to Spain {spania}. We do not know whether or not Paul ever reached Spain as he desired. It is possible that he was released from Rome for several years and actually reached Spain, only to be returned to Rome. But, whether he did or not, Paul never lost his vision of reaching those who never heard. We often get tired and say to ourselves "Well, I've done my share of the work, let someone else do the rest.". But not Paul, he continued to press on as long as he could.

I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there,

after I have enjoyed your company for a while.

Verse 24

Here we see Paul's motives in stopping in Rome. One of his major goals is to have them "assist" him on his journey to Spain. In other words, Paul wished to go to Rome on "deputation". We find this in several other passages.

What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship. [Acts 20:38]

All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city. [Acts 21:5]

In these verses we see the word with the meaning that others accompanied him on the first part of his trip. But we have also the following.

After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you - for I will be going through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey wherever I go.

[1 Corinthians 16:5,6]

I planned to visit you first so that you may benefit me twice. I planned to visit you on my way to Macedonia and then have you send me on my way to Macedonia and to come back to you from Macedonia and then have you send me on my way to Judea. [2 Corinthians 1:15-16]

where again the word means to provide him with what is needed for the trip. John also writes about this sort of support.

They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. [3 John 1:6]

There are two points in these passages we need to see. First, the word {propempeo} means literally "to send forward", but also includes the concept of "going forward with" (in Acts). When Paul, or any other missionary, is to be sent on a missionary term, those who send are to go along with him, in spirit. It is not enough to simply give him money and say "so long, see you again". The word implies that we go along with him in spirit and support him with our prayers and concerns.

Secondly, Paul wrote "after I have enjoyed your company for a while", and in Corinthians, "I will stay with you for a while". In both cases there is the idea that we should get to know the one we are sending forth and that they should get to know us. It is not the TV pitch of sending money to some person and/or cause of which we know nothing about. We should know the person we are sending forth and they should know the ones who send them.

Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jew's spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them in material blessings. Verses 25-27

Here Paul hits on another form of missions support. Not all that Paul received was for his

own use in the ministry. Here he notes that he had received gifts from these churches to take back to Jerusalem where the saints were in much need. We also note that support is a two way street. If one sacrifices to provide for another's spiritual needs, this person should reciprocate by taking care of the material needs of the first.

So after I have completed the task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ. Verses 28-29

Paul here summarizes this section. Paul, very tactfully, says that he hopes that he won't be disappointed by their support when he comes to them (i.e. he will come "in full measure"). Paul now closes this chapter with the most vital part.

I urge you brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there. Verses 30-31

Paul finishes with the most urgent of his requests of those at Rome, that they pray for him. Maybe they were already praying for him when they got together and prayed "God bless all the missionaries". But that is not enough! Paul here lists two specific prayer requests. He was very concerned about the unbelievers at Jerusalem and asked for prayer in this regard. Secondly, he prays that he will have a fruitful visit with the believers. We need to have specific prayer requests from our missionaries and we need to then pray specifically.

Then by God's will I can come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed. The God of peace will be with all, Amen.

Paul did get to Rome, but not in the manner he hoped. This verse begins with the word "then". When? after prayer. Did the Romans pray as Paul requested? Consider Paul's first visit to Rome in which he writes...

At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. [2 Timothy 4:16]

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Verses 1,2

Paul begins the personal greetings with mention of a woman by the name of Phoebe. She is nowhere else mentioned in the Scriptures so we shall have to take her at face value. The name means "bright" or "radiant" and so we shall call her, "Phoebe the radiant Christian". The fact she was to carry this epistle to Rome while (apparently) on a business trip, indicates that she was a rather prominent and trustworthy woman. According to Howson & Conybeare, she must have been a widow or she would not have been in this position.

Paul notes that this woman was a "sister" which, as usual, means "in the Lord" for there is no reason to expect her to be related to Paul. Paul also notes that she was a "deaconess" for the church at Cenchreae. This church was located near Corinth which was where Paul wrote this epistle. There has long been a debate about the wording of this passage. The KJV and NAS have that she was a "servant" of the church rather than "deaconess". Phillips and the Amplified Bible as does Wuest. The Greek word is {diakonos} from which we get deacon or, for feminine gender, deaconess. She was definitely a "deaconess" of that church for that is the word used. What one may argue is whether the term is a description of what she did (serve) or the office she held.

Most would agree that the term describes an office. Most of these seem to believe that the office was filled, generally, with women who were widows. There is a tendency today to have husbands and wives serve as deacons and deaconess, and there may be some Biblical basis for this in 1 Timothy . . .

In the same way their wives are to be ...
[1 Timothy 3:11]

Paul asks, with regard to this woman, to receive her and to help her and, in fact, "commends" this to them. "Commend" here comes from {sunhistemi} which means, literally, "to cause to stand with". Paul says, in effect, that he is standing her in their midst to become a part of them. "help" here is from {parastete} which has the same root as the word "commend". In other words, Paul has "caused her to stand with those in Rome" and is now asking them to not move but to "stand beside her".

He asks them to stand beside her in {pragmati} she might have need for. The word is commonly used in business and, especially, in legal matters, hence we have . . .

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgement instead of before the saints?
[1 Corinthians 6:1]

where the word is translated "dispute". For this reason, Howson & Conybeare believe she was going to Rome on some legal matter. What is interesting here is that it appears that Paul is not asking them to aid her in a spiritual matter but a legal matter (or some business affair). It is interesting then, that Paul indicates that we need to help others in matters other than spiritual. We often believe that we are to help one another in spiritual things but do we also help each other in other matters as well?

Paul ends with the note that this woman has been a "great help". He use the same word we had for "help" before. She had "stood by" Paul and many others herself and now, it is time for others to come and stand beside her.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Verses 3-5a

Next Paul brings to mind a couple, Priscilla and Aquila. We see these people other places in the N.T. We meet them in Acts 18:2 where we find that they lived (at that time) in Corinth. They were Jews who had to flee Rome and tentmakers (like Paul) by trade. It was here that he wrote the epistle to Rome and then left Corinth, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. He left them in Ephesus where there undertook some serious Bible study with a Jew who badly needed the instruction (Acts 18:24-26).

The couple seem to have taken up abode in Ephesus for we find Paul sending them greetings there . . .

Greet Priscilla and Aquila . . .
[2 Timothy 4:19]

And when Paul wrote to Corinth from Ephesus, he wrote. . .

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla send you greetings.
[1 Corinthians 16:19]

But now, they must be at Rome. Perhaps they, like Phoebe, had business to attend to there. Here Paul points out that they "risked their necks" for Paul. These two must have been real saints. They were great Bible teachers; they risked their own lives for the sake of the saints; they hosted a church in their home. Note that in all cases but one, the wife is mentioned first as the more prominent of the two. Note also that the first two persons in Romans 16 were women. Of the 29 people in this passage, at least 9 of them are women. Women apparently played a prominent role in the church from the very beginning.

From here on, Paul makes short mention of others. We shall look at each of these.

Great my dear friend Epanenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.
Verse 5b

"Epanenetus" comes from the Greek "to praise" and so we shall call him the "man of praise". We know nothing about him except that he was Paul's first convert in Asia (Asia Minor - Turkey). It is interesting that he was still Paul's dear friend after many years. Paul was not like some evangelists of today who "win them and leave them".

Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.
Verse 6

Next is "Mary" (the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Miriam"). Another woman in the church. She is, apparently, not any of the Mary's we find in the Gospels. The sentence here has more to it than meets the eye. First, "worked" is {kopiao} which means more than simply "to work". It means, primarily, "to grow weary" or "to grow exhausted". Here, then, it means to work until one can work no more because of being exhausted. To this is

added the word "many". She worked thusly in many areas for the saints.

Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

Verse 7

These two men are mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. "Andronicus" means "Man of Victory". The second name is Junias (a man's name) or, in the KJV, "Junia", a woman's name. In either case we know nothing about the second person, not even the meaning of the name. What we do know is that they were relatives of Paul's. What the specific relationship might be is not know. Perhaps they might be brothers, but he doesn't say this. They could be cousins.

There are some interesting things to note about these two. First, Paul says that they were apostles. There were, from this and several other passages, other apostles like Paul who worked to establish the church. We know nothing of them however. But, according to Paul, they were outstanding apostles. They were converted before Paul and it may be that their greatness could be attributed to the fact that they prayed for the "cousin" Paul that he would be converted too!

Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord.

Verse 8

The name apparently means "enlarged" (amplified?). We know nothing of him other than this mention of his name and that Paul loved him in the Lord.

Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ and my dear friend Stachys. Verse 9

"Urbanus" comes from the Greek for "city" ("urban") while "Stachys" comes from the Greek word for an ear of corn. Connected together, we might say that the first was a "city fellow" and the other a "rural farmer". Both are mentioned together here and might indicate the universality of the Gospel, reaching city folk and rural folk alike.

Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

Verses 10 and 11

We do not know who Appeles was but those of the household of Aristobulus were, no doubt, slaves as was Herodion. Those in the household of Narcissus were probably slaves too. It is interesting to note that those who knew what real bondage was were counted among those who had found the one who releases us from all of our bonds and especially the bonds of sin.

Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked hard in the Lord.

Verse 12

"Tryphaena" comes from the Greek word for luxury, as found in James,

You have lived on earth in luxury ...

[James 5.5]

So we will call her the "Grand lady of Christianity". "Tryphosa" her sister also comes from this same root. Perhaps they were "high society" women. The catch is that these are

names given to slaves and hence they really were, probably, women who had served in some household and had been freed. "Persis" means literally, "a Persian woman". All three of these women, like the Mary of verse 6 worked to the point of exhaustion in many areas. It is a rather sad commentary for the men that all of the ones singled out in this chapter as being hard workers are women!

Greet Refus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother who has been a mother to me too.
Verse 13

"Refus" means "red". We don't know anything about "Red" and Paul says nothing about him other than to note that his mother had served as a mother to him as well.

Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. Greet Philologos, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them.
Verses 14 and 15

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.
Verse 16

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way, contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them,
Verse 17

In the midst of the final greetings Paul adds a word of warning. He says "to watch out". The work is {skopeo} from which we get words like "telescope". Paul uses the noun when he writes...

I press on toward the goal ...
[Philippians 3:14]

It means to set your eyes on something in the distance and then to keep them fixed upon it. In other words, we are to keep a sharp lookout for the problems which Paul here mentions.

We are to watch out for two types of people in the church. These are those who "cause divisions" and "put obstacles" in the way. The first of these comes from {dichostasias}. The word means "to cause to stand apart". Recall the beginning of this chapter when Paul wrote regarding Phoebe and that he was "standing her in their midst" and asked them to "stand with" her? Here is his warning about those who do just the opposite. They cause people in the church to choose up sides and to have sects and other divisions.

The second group he warns against are those who "put obstacles" in the way. The word is {skandala} and has been used several times already in this epistle. It is often translated "stumbling block" in the KJV. But now, we note that both of these are contrasted with "contrary to the teaching you have had". There have been many who have caused division by teaching things contrary (or in addition) to the Word of God. In fact, the division of The Church into the many sects and denominations today is due, in large part, to those who have caused division by false teaching or contrary teaching.

As far as the stumbling block is concerned, we consider this several lessons back in connection with dealings with a weaker brother.

For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetite. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.
Verse 18

Paul says that these people who cause division and put obstacles in their way are not serving Christ but their own appetites. I don't believe we are to take the word in a very literal sense, but in the context of the contrast. Their goal is not to further the work of the Gospel but to further their own reputations and to enhance their own positions in the church. Paul says that, to do this, they use "smooth talk" and "flattery". The words are {chrestologias} and {eulogias}. The first word is found only here in the N.T. and is a compound which means literally, "kind words". The meaning of the other word is not hard to see from the transliteration "to speak well". In all other passages in the N.T. it is translated "bless". Neither of these forms of speech are bad in of themselves. It is when they are used to deceive the "naive".