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The Letter of Paul to the ROMANS



Although, because of its length, it is the first in the letters of the New Testament, Romans was probably the latest of Paul's undisputed letters to be written (see "Letters/Epistles in the New Testament," p. 240 NT). Romans also contains the longest and most complex sustained argument in any of Paul's letters even though it is addressed to Christians he has never met (1.13). For these reasons the letter, especially chs 1-8, has often been read as Paul's theological "last will and testament," a reflection on and a summary of the gospel of salvation in Christ. It was also intended to persuade the Christians of Rome to support Paul's intended mission to Spain (15.23-24).

Paul had more in view than creating a base for future missionary endeavors. He meant to proclaim to the Christians of Rome the gospel, "the power of God for salvation" (1.15-16; 15.18-19), and by so doing strengthen and encourage them (1.11-12). Romans is, like Paul's other letters, an instrument of moral instruction and exhortation (see 15.14-15).

The letter was occasioned in part by circumstances in Rome during the reign of the emperor Nero (54-68 CE). Among those to whom Paul sends greetings in ch 16 are Prisca and Aquila, known from Acts 18.2 as among the Jews expelled from Rome by the emperor Claudius around 49 CE. Their presence in Rome at the time Paul writes may reflect Nero's suspension of that edict (Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25.3). The recent return of Jews to the imperial capital, including Jewish Christians like Prisca and Aquila, who had been driven out and probably lost property and community ties during their exile, may have aroused tensions within Christian house groups in which Gentile believers had become predominant.

Paul's appeal to Gentile Christians in Rome not to "boast" over Jews (11.13-36) comes at the end of chs 9-11, the climax of the letter. Paul's argument responds to an incipient anti-Judaism, which was already rife among Roman aristocrats and was beginning to emerge in non-Jewish Christian circles as well. Given the horrors of an anti-Jewish pogrom in Alexandria (38-41 CE), and even more recent tax riots that had turned deadly in Puteoli, a city south of Rome, Paul was concerned to prevent in Rome the sort of civic disturbance in which the city's minority Jewish population would be especially vulnerable. This is at least one explanation for the notorious exhortation to "be subject to the governing authorities" (13.1-7n.). Similarly, Paul's admonitions regarding the "weak in faith," concerned with the observance of diet and special days (14.1-15.13), address tensions between Jewish Christians, who retained their Jewish traditions, and Gentile Christians, who did not.

The theme of God's "righteousness" (1.17) or "justice" (3.5) resonates throughout the letter. At stake is God's faithfulness in the face of human faithlessness, as the rhetorical questions that punctuate the letter show (2.3-4, 21-23; 3.3, 5, 7, 9, 27, 29; 4.1; 6.1-3, 15-16; 7.7, 13; 9.14, 19, 30; 11.1, 11). God's righteousness is manifest in the uncompromising judgment of all impiety and wickedness, and also in unwavering loyalty to the covenant with Israel. Paul wants the Christians of Rome to respect God's integrity in the salvation offered them through the faithful obedience of Jesus (5.6, 18-19; see 3.22, 26n.).

Paul is Christ's apostle, obligated to "bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles,"

among whom he includes his Roman audience (1.1-6). He declares the gospel of God's salvation to all who believe, Jews and Greeks alike, but "to the Jew first" (1.16). The priority of the Jews in God's plan of salvation is an important theme in the letter (3.1-2; 9.1-4). Paul's mission to Gentiles should provoke his fellow Jews to jealousy (11.13-14), perhaps by convincing them that the last days prophesied by Isaiah were at hand (see 15.12). At last, Paul declares, "all Israel will be saved" (11.26), and all the nations will join Israel in the worship of the one true God (15.7-13).

As he writes, the apostle is about to present to the church in Jerusalem both monetary aid from churches in his mission field (15.25-27) and an embassy of converts from paganism (1 Cor 16.3-4; on the eventual catastrophe of this mission, see Acts 21.27-30). Although the Roman Christians have not had the opportunity to contribute to this collection in tangible ways, Paul asks for their prayers (15.30-32). He also writes to safeguard the sanctity of the "offering of the Gentiles" (15.15-16) by exhorting the Christians of Rome to holy living (12.1-3; 15.7-9). Non-Jewish Christians make sacrificial offering to God by the holiness of their lives.

The theological convictions expressed in the Letter to the Romans resemble those in letters to congregations Paul himself had founded. By virtue of their baptism into Christ, Christians must no longer let sin have dominion over them (6.1-14). They are no longer to live as the unbelieving world does (1.18-32), but to give "spiritual worship" to God through sobriety of thought and bodily purity (12.1-3). Just so Paul had reminded the Corinthians, Galatians, and Thessalonians that they must no longer live as "the Gentiles who do not know God," having been sanctified by Christ (1 Cor 6.9-11; Gal 5.22-24; 1 Thess 4.1-5). Universal accountability before God, Paul's theme throughout the early chapters of the letter, is more specifically applied in chs 12-16. Rather than being a treatise on Christian salvation, Romans is a sustained appeal for holy living, directed to Gentile Christians tempted to look down on their beleaguered Jewish neighbors, within the Christian congregations and without. The apostle's call to realize in common life the justice of God which the Christian congregation celebrates is the letter's enduring legacy.

1 Paul, a servant^a of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit^b of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the

Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

7 To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is

a Gk slave b Or Spirit

1.1-7: Salutation. Ancient letters began with the names of sender and recipient and a short greeting (see Acts 23.26). Paul's expansion of this form reflects the liturgical context in which his letter would be read. **1:** A *servant* . . . *called* . . . *set apart*, the characteristic marks of Israel's prophets (Jer 1.5; Am 7.14). *Apostle*, lit. one "sent forth," i.e., by God (Isa 6.8; Jer 1.7; Ezek 2.3-4). **3:** *Gospel*, see 1.16n. *Descended from David*, messiah in David's royal lineage. **4:** *The spirit of holiness*, God's Spirit (see 8.2n.). The corresponding Heb phrase is translated "holy spirit" in Ps 51.11; Isa 63.10-11 (cf. 1QS 4.21; 8.16; 9.3; 1QH 7.6-7; 9.32). **5-6:** Despite greetings to Jews among his audience (16.3, 7, 11), Paul addresses the Roman Christians as Gentiles (1.13-15). **7:** *Saints*, lit. "holy ones."

1.8-17: Thanksgiving. Ancient letters continued with a prayer of thanksgiving. Paul's thanksgivings

ROMANS 1.9–1.23

proclaimed throughout the world. ⁹For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel^a of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers, ¹⁰asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹²or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I want you to know, brothers and sisters,^b that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as I have among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish ¹⁵—hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and

also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."^c

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; ²¹for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools; ²³and they exchanged the glory of

^a Gk *my spirit in the gospel* ^b Gk *brothers*
^c Or *The one who is righteous through faith will live*

signal important themes in his letters. He describes his obligation to *proclaim the gospel* to the Romans as priestly service (v. 9; see 15.16,25), grounded in the revelation of God's righteousness (vv. 16–17). **10–13:** *By God's will . . . prevented*, apostolic obligations have delayed Paul's visiting the Romans (15.18–22). **11–13:** *Share . . . reap some harvest*, Paul seeks an active response from the Romans (15.14n). *Strengthen . . . encouraged*, 1 Thess 3.2. Polite circumspection dominates here and at 15.14–15. **14:** *To Greeks and . . . barbarians*, Paul describes the world as Roman orators saw it, divided into more or less civilized peoples (cf. 1.16n). *To you also*, the Romans stand within Paul's obligation as apostle to the Gentiles (15.14–19). **16–17:** Often taken as the "theme" of the letter, these verses explain Paul's eagerness to *proclaim the gospel* (v. 15) to the Romans. **16:** *I am not ashamed*, a confession of faith (cf. 4 Macc 5.34–38; 6.20; 9.2). Paul's "boast" in God's power is a recurrent theme in the letter (5.1–4,11; 15.17; cf. 1 Thess 1.5; 1 Cor 2.4). *The gospel*, "euangelion," in nonbiblical Greek, celebrated the triumph of a ruler; Paul announces God's triumph. Salvation is the result of the life-giving and right-making *power of God* (see 4.17; 5.11,12–21; 6.1–14; 8.1–4,10–11,21–25; 11.15,23; 15.18–19). *To the Jew first*, 2.9–10; 3.1–2; 9.4. *And also to the Greek*, Paul now describes the world from a Jewish point of view (cf. 1.14). **17:** *The righteousness of God*, or "justice" (as at 3.5). God's character as righteous, being *revealed* as God brings human beings into right relationship (see 3.21–26), is a *sign* of the last days (see 13.11–12). God's vindication before the nations is in view (Ps 98.2; Isa 51.5). *Through faith*, i.e., God's faithfulness (as at 3.3). *For faith*, God's faithfulness elicits human trust. *The one who . . . by faith*, Hab 2.4. Like other Jews, Paul may have read the citation as a messianic prophecy: *The Righteous One*, the messiah (Acts 3.14; 7.52; 22.14), will live on the basis of faithfulness (see 3.22n.).

1.18–32: An indictment of human wickedness and injustice. Paul argues in 1.18–3.20 that God's justice allows no impunity for any who willfully do wrong. **18:** *The wrath of God*, 2.5; 4.9. God's righteousness (1.17) requires that God no longer pass over sins with forbearance (see 3.25). *Wickedness*, lit. "injustice." **19–23:** Idolatry is an attempt to deny awareness of God, thus evading accountability for one's actions. Its opposite is the "spiritual worship" offered by renewed minds (12.1–2). **20:** *Without excuse*, 2.1; 3.19; compare Wis 13.1–9. **23:** *Images*, idolatry was condemned by the Torah (Ex 20.4–6) and ridiculed by the prophets (Isa 40.18–20; 42.17; 45.16,20; Jer 10.1–16). Like other Jews, Paul attributes the wicked-

ROMANS 1.24–2.5

the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, ²⁷and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameful acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. ²⁹They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, God-

haters,⁴ insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

2 Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. ²You say,^b "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." ³Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's

^a Or *God-hated* ^b Gk lacks *You say*

ness characteristic of the pagan world to idolatry. A more irenic tone is attributed to Paul in Acts 17.22–23. **24–27:** *Impurity*, disordered thinking and behavior, to be left behind in baptism (6.6–14; 12.1). **24–25:** *God gave them up*, in a spiral of depravity, injustice leads mortals to suppress their awareness of truth and turn from God (vv. 18–23); God abandons them to increasing wickedness (vv. 24–32). *The Creator, who is blessed forever*, spontaneous praise to God (6.17; 7.25; 9.5; 11.33–36; 16.25–27). **26–27:** *Degrading passions*, while Torah forbids a male "lying with a male as with a woman" (Lev 18.22), Paul's Jewish contemporaries criticized a range of sexual behaviors common in the pagan world. Although widely read today as a reference to homosexuality, the language of *unnatural* intercourse was more often used in Paul's day to denote not the orientation of sexual desire, but its immoderate indulgence, which was believed to weaken the body (*the due penalty*). **28–31:** The spiraling descent into wickedness reaches its nadir in these vices, presented here in list form as elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., Gal 5.19–21; 1 Tim 1.9–10; 1 Pet 4.3) and in Greek and Roman literature. *Full of envy, murder, strife*, the notorious perversity and brutality of emperors like Gaius (Caligula), or Paul's contemporary, Nero, come readily to mind. **32:** *They know God's decree*, they cannot plead ignorance as an excuse (see 1.20).

2.1–16: All are accountable before God for their works. **1:** Paul attacks as hypocritical the presumption that God will have mercy on some by exempting them from punishment (2.4). **2:** *You say*, added to express one interpretation of this passage as a "trap" for "the Jew," who judges the pagan indicted in 1.18–32. Jews are not clearly addressed before 2.17. Here, any are condemned who *know that God's judgment . . . is in accordance with truth*, yet do *the very same things* they condemn in others (2.1,3). **4:** *Do you despise . . . kindness*, the question is rhetorical. Paul warns Christians not to presume God's grace in 6.1,15. **5:** *Day of wrath*, the time of divine judgment (see Isa 2.12n; 13.9,13; Lam 2.1; 1 Thess 1.10; etc.), understood in early Christian thought to be imminent and universal (e.g., 13.12; 2 Pet 3.10). God's punishment of sin coheres with God's righteousness (see 1.17–18). **6–11:** Judgment according to one's

ROMANS 2.6-2.28

righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶For he will repay according to each one's deeds: ⁷to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹For God shows no partiality.

¹²All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. ¹⁵They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.

works: see 2 Cor 11.15; Jas 2.14-26, where the Gk word "erga," translated *deeds* here, is "works." **9-10:** The Jew is first in salvation (1.16; 3.1-2), therefore also in responsibility. *Anguish and distress*, eschatological woe (2 Cor 4.8). **11:** *No partiality*, Deut 10.17; 2 Chr 19.7. No discrimination compromises God's justice. **12:** *Apart from the law*, referring to Gentiles, just as *under the law* refers to Jews. **13:** *Hearers and doers*, Mt 7.21; Jas 1.22-25. *Doers of the law . . . will be justified*, see 3.20n. **14-15:** Ancient Judaism acknowledged righteous Gentiles who did "by nature" *what the law requires*, lit. "the work of the law." For Paul, those who walk according to the Spirit fulfill the law's *just requirement* (8.4). **15:** *Their own conscience also bears witness*, thus they acknowledge the validity of God's law. A similar argument appears in 7.14-22.

2.17-29: Does being a Jew relieve one from accountability to God? Paul makes his point through imaginary conversation with a Jew (the diatribe style). **17:** Although vv. 17-24 have often been read as an "indictment" of the Jew, Paul considers Israel's privileges real (see 3.1-9; 9.1-4). *Boast*, Paul warns repeatedly against groundless boasting before God (see 2.23; 3.27; 4.5; 5.1-3,11; 11.17-20). **21-23:** *Will you not teach yourself?* Paul interrogates an imaginary witness, whose testimony leads to the conclusions in vv. 25-29. Israel's covenantal privileges do not lessen accountability before God. **22:** *Do you rob temples?* While the Torah forbade idolatry, Jews in Paul's day were careful not to dishonor pagan shrines (Philo, *De Conf. Ling.* 163; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 269; *Ant.* 4.207). **23:** *Do you dishonor God?* A question in the earliest punctuated manuscript. **24:** Isa 52.5; cf. Ezek 36.20. **25-29:** These verses expand the principle that "all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law" (v. 12). **26:** *The requirements of the law*, see v. 14; 8.1-4n. **29:** *Real circumcision . . . the heart*, Deut 10.16; 30.6,8; Jer 4.4; 9.26; Ezek 44.9.

¹⁷But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God ¹⁸and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, ¹⁹and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, ²¹you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

²⁵Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external

and physical. ²⁹Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.

3 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ²Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews^a were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written,

"So that you may be justified in your words, and prevail in your judging."^b

⁵But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), "Let us do evil so that good may come"? Their condemnation is deserved!

⁹What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, ¹⁰as it is written:

3.1-9: God's integrity in the covenant with Israel. **1:** The *advantage* of the Jew is real (9.1-4), but does not provide immunity from God's just judgment. **3:** The faithlessness of some Jews does not alter God's *faithfulness* to the covenant. **4:** Ps 116.11; 51.4. **5:** *The justice of God* (see 1.17n.) requires the judgment of injustice. **8:** *As some people slander us*, it is not clear who is slandering whom, but in 6.1,15, similar language refutes a possible misunderstanding of God's grace in Christ. **9:** *Are we any better off?* This translation echoes v. 2, yet reaches a different conclusion. The Gk may also be translated "Do we have a defense?"

3.10-20: The universality of God's judgment. These quotations from the Hebrew Bible insist that no one may claim to satisfy God's standards. **10-12:** Ps 14.1-2; 53.1-2. **13:** Ps 5.9; 140.3. **14:** Ps 10.7. **15-17:** Prov 1.16; Isa 59.7-8. **18:** Ps 36.1. **19:** The law holds everyone accountable before God (cf. 2.13). The previous scriptures emphasize sins of false speech (cf. 1.18). **20:** Ps 143.2. The lack of human righteousness is a theme throughout the Psalms and other Jewish writings (e.g., 1 Enoch 81.5; 1QH 8.20; 17.14-15). *By deeds prescribed by the law*, lit. "works of the law," is Paul's addition to the Psalm text (see 3.28n; Dan 9.18; 1QH 15.17). The "doers of the law" who "will be justified" (2.13) are not those who merely possess the law, but those who by God's Spirit fulfill its "just requirement" (8.4), by "doing," lit. working, "good" (2.7,10).

ROMANS 2.29-3.20

"There is no one who is righteous, not even one;

¹¹there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God.

¹²All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one."

¹³"Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of vipers is under their lips."

¹⁴"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

¹⁵"Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known."

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

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

^a Gk they ^b Gk when you are being judged
^c Or at any disadvantage?

ROMANS 3.21-4.6

21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ^a for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement^b by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.^c

27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of

Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

4 What then are we to say was gained by^d Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." 4 Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5 But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. 6 So also David

a Or through the faith of Jesus Christ *b* Or a place of atonement *c* Or who has the faith of Jesus *d* Other ancient authorities read say about

3.21-31: The revelation of God's justice. 21-22: *Apart from the law*, where no one might lay hold of the law as a defense from God's judgment. *Disclosed*, 1.17. The *righteousness of God* involves God's action in Christ to "justify" (make right) those who trust in God (see 6.1-23). 22: The alternate translation in note *a*, *the faith of Jesus Christ*, is increasingly preferred. It conforms this phrase to identically structured phrases in 3.3 ("the faithfulness of God") and 4.12,16 ("the faith of . . . Abraham") and reflects the importance for Paul of Jesus' faithful obedience (5.19; Phil 2.8). 25-26: Paul emphasizes God's integrity and justice, now "revealed" (1.17), not in putting up with sin but in dealing with it decisively through the *faith of Jesus* (see note *c*). *Sacrifice of atonement*, 4 Macc 17.22. The translation in note *b* (see Ex 25.17-22) is less likely. *Divine forbearance*, God has patiently withheld wrath, not to indulge sin but to lead sinners to repentance (2.4). 27: *Boasting is excluded by the law of faith*, i.e., by the law rightly understood as eliciting trust in God's saving power (see 2.17n.; 4.5; 11.18n.; Deut 9.4-6; Dan 9.18). 28: *We hold*, Paul's language resembles recently published Dead Sea Scroll fragments listing "works of the law" that will be "reckoned as righteousness" for those who perform them (4Q397, 398). Paul's point is that one is *justified by faith*, meaning either one's faithful obedience to God (see 1.5,16), God's faithfulness (as in 3.3), or Jesus' faithfulness (see 3.22,26n.). 29-31: *God is one* (see Deut 6.4), judging Jew and Gentile alike on the basis of *faith*, i.e., faithful obedience (2.13-16), which will indeed *uphold the law* (7.7,12-16).

4.1-25: Abraham as a test case. Was Abraham reckoned righteous before God on any other basis than faithfulness? 1: *Abraham . . . the flesh*, this translation implies Paul refers only to Jews. The Gk may also be translated "What shall we say: Have we found Abraham to be our ancestor according to the flesh?" which leads to the negative answer in 4.11-12,16 (cf. 9.6-9). 2-5: Paul finds in Gen 15.6 proof that righteousness was *reckoned* to Abraham as a *gift*, not as *wages* paid as *something due* (6.23). God is *free* from any obligation to mortals (see 4.16). 5: God *justifies the ungodly*, Paul shares his contemporaries' view that God had called Abraham out of idolatry (see Gen 12.1-4; 13.4; 17.9-14,23-27). Abraham's justification stands in contrast with the "ungodliness" of the pagan world (1.18) and provides the prototype for God's justification of the ungodly through Christ's death (5.6). 6-8: Paul quotes Ps 32.1-2 (Gk) to bring in the theme of *blessedness* (Gen 12.2-3; Gal 3.8). 9-12: Abraham was justified (Gen 15.6) before

ROMANS 4.7-4.25

speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;
8 blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin."

9 Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." 10 How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, 12 and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us; 17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18 Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already^a as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 Therefore his faith^b "was reckoned to him as righteousness." 23 Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who

a Other ancient authorities lack already
b Gk Therefore it

he was circumcised (Gen 17.24), on account of his *faith*, therefore he could be ancestor of both circumcised (Gen 12.2; 15.13-14) and uncircumcised (Gen 17.5; see v. 17). 12: *The faith that . . . Abraham had*, his faithful trust in God (vv. 5,17). 13-15: God's promise comes through the *righteousness of faith*, or "faithful righteousness," like that of Abraham (vv. 16,20), not through the law. 14: *The adherents of the law*, compare "hearers of the law" in 2.13. *Faith is null and the promise is void*, if God's blessing depended on the performance of those who possessed the law (3.3-4; 9.6-9). 15: *The law brings wrath*, Paul may have in mind the solemn curses pronounced on the disobedient in Deut 28. *But where there is no law . . . violation*, Abraham did not stand under the law when he responded to God in faith.

4.16-25: The example of Abraham's faith. 16: *Not only . . . but also*, Jews and Gentiles alike inherit God's promise as they *share the faith of Abraham*. 17: Gen 17.5. Abraham's faith in God's promise despite his own "dead" body (v. 19) is an example for all those who trust God *who raised Jesus . . . from the dead* (v. 24). God's power to *call into existence the things that do not exist* is a key theme (v. 24; 6.4-5,9-11; 8.11; 9.25-26; 11.5). Contrast Abraham's faith with those who refuse to acknowledge God through creation (1.20-22). 18: Gen 15.5. *Hoping against hope*, see 8.24-25. 20-21: God's ability to do what he had promised is at stake throughout Romans, especially regarding Israel (3.3-4; 9.6). *Gave glory to God*, again Abraham is contrasted with the ungodly of 1.21-24; see 15.9-12. 22-23: Gen 15.6.

ROMANS 5.1-5.16

was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we^a have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access^b to this grace in which we stand; and we^c boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we^c also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 9 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.^d 10 For if while we were enemies, we were

reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— 13 sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14 Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. 16 And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judg-

a Other ancient authorities read *let us* b Other ancient authorities add *by faith* c Or *let us* d Gk *the wrath*

5.1-21: The nature of justification in Christ. In light of the preceding argument, Paul declares that those justified in Christ may *boast* (vv. 2-3,11), not merely of being forgiven their sins (see vv. 8-10), but *much more surely*, of being saved from *wrath* (v. 9) and the *dominion of death* (vv. 14-17). This chapter prepares for the call to righteous living in ch 6. 1: Being *justified by faith* (see 3.28n.) means entering God's life-giving and right-making *dominion* (v. 21), as ch 6 will make clear. Justification *by faith* may mean by the faith of Jesus, i.e., his obedience to God as shown in his death (v. 19). Thus Paul can speak of being justified *through Jesus Christ* (vv. 11,21), by *Jesus' blood* (v. 9), i.e., through his *death* (v. 10), or by his *obedience* (v. 19). 2-5: *Hope in the coming glory of God*, see 8.16-25. 2: *We boast* (or "let us boast," see v. 11), not in our own works (3.27; 4.2) but in God's power. 3: *Sufferings*, see 8.18,35-36. 5: *The Holy Spirit*, see 1.4n.; 8.2n. On the work of *the Spirit*, see 8.2-17,23-27. 6: *While we were still weak*, God's grace preceded any human act that might constitute a claim to righteousness before God (see 3.27; 4.2; 9.11-12,16; regarding the Gentiles, 9.30). 9-11: Paul stresses that God's saving purpose is *much more* than a reprieve from the punishment due for sins (vv. 15,17). 9-10: *Justified by his blood . . . reconciled . . . through the death of his Son*, see v. 1n.

5.12-21: Adam and Christ. Christ's saving work surpasses even the effects of Adam's disobedience: (A different comparison of Christ and Adam is made in 1 Cor 15.21-23,45-49.) 12-14: The catastrophe in Adam's transgression (Gen 3) is greater than the punishments reckoned for individual transgressions. It also introduced the *dominion* of sin (see v. 21; 6.6,12,14), and *much more*, allowed for *death to invade* creation (Gen 3.19,22-24). 14: *To Moses*, until the law was given to Moses; see v. 20. *The one who was to come*, the messiah. 15-21: Salvation "much more" than forgiveness. 15-16: Despite an apparent similarity between their effects on the many, Christ's obedience accomplished *much more* than to reverse the effects of Adam's sin. 17-18: Christ's *act of righteousness* (see 8.1-4n.) brought the dominion of life

ROMANS 5.17-6.16

ment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. 17 If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. 19 For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 20 But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification^a leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6 What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by

the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. 13 No longer present your members to sin as instruments^b of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments^b of righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

15 What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you

a Or *righteousness* b Or *weapons*

(6.13-14,23-24). 20: The giving of the law is a minor episode, serving only to document sin's dominion through the increase of trespasses (7.7-11). The law could not bring that dominion to an end; God's powerful grace could (8.1-4; *Damascus Document A* 3.1-12).

6.1-23: Life in Christ requires obedience. 1: Compare other leading questions in 4.1; 6.15,21; 7.7,13. *Should we continue in sin?* (see v. 2; 3.8n.). Only if grace were simply a matter of being relieved of the punishment for trespasses. But it is "much more" (5.12-21). 2-6: Baptism is a dying with Christ (v. 6; 7.6; Gal 2.19) to the power of sin, assuring that *we will also live with him* (v. 8). Contrast Eph 2.5-6; Col 2.12-13, where Christians are said already to be *raised* with Christ. 7-11: *Whoever has died*, whether Christ, through his own death (v. 10), or Christians, by baptism (v. 14); see 7.1-6. 9-10: The lethal collusion of sin and death are evident (see 5.12-14,21). The Gk word translated *has dominion* (5.21) is related to the word translated "lord" (see vv. 16-17n.). 12-13: *Instruments of wickedness . . . of righteousness*, lit. "weapons of injustice" and "justice." Through martial imagery Paul calls Christians not to surrender themselves as sin's prisoners of war. 14-15: If grace provided immunity from the law's verdict, then we might well "continue in sin" (see v. 1). 16-20: An analogy from slavery. Since war captives were often enslaved, these verses may continue the imagery of vv. 13-14. 16-17: *Slaves . . . obedient*, human existence is inevitably some form of obedience. Note that Paul refrains here from describing God as "Lord," lit. "master." 17: *Obedient from the heart*, not in slavish obedience but with genuine intention (12.1-2).

ROMANS 6.17-7.10

present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations.^a For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **7** Do you not know, brothers and sisters^b—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? ²Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but

if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. ³Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

⁴In the same way, my friends,^b you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

⁷What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived ¹⁰and I died, and the very com-

^a Gk the weakness of your flesh ^b Gk brothers

18-20: "Not under law" (v. 15) does not imply freedom from moral obligation. **21:** *The things of which you now are ashamed*, 1.24-32.

7.1-25: A defense of the law. Paul relies on an analogy from marriage law. One is "free from the law" (v. 3) only when free from the circumstances to which the law rightly applies; here, free from the dominion of sin (6.6-11). Just as marriage law remains valid, so the Torah remains *holy* (v. 12), *spiritual* (v. 14), and *good* (v. 16). **1:** *Those who know the law*, i.e., marriage law. Paul does not presume specific knowledge of the Torah. **4:** The Christian has *died to the law*, and is thus "discharged" from it (v. 6); **5:** *Sinful passions, aroused by the law*, 5.20; 7.7-11. **6:** *That which held us captive*, the law, which bound us in our relationship to sin (6.15-23).

7.1-13: The law's poisonous interaction with sin. **7:** Leading questions (see v. 13) express Paul's concern to exonerate the law. *I would not have known sin*, Paul is not speaking autobiographically (v. 9; Phil 3.6); some have suggested he refers to Adam (v. 10). More likely he presents a "speech in character," reflecting a typical human experience of the law. Although the law (here, Ex 20.17; Deut 5.21) aggravates the dominion of sin in one's members, the law itself remains valid. **8:** *Covetousness*, or "desire," was regarded by Paul's contemporaries as the root of all evil (see Jas 1.15; 4 Macc 2.4-6; Philo, *De spec. leg.* 4.84-94), even the source of Adam's sin (Philo, *Leg. all.* 3.115). *Sin lies dead*, cf. 5.13-14. **10:** *Promised life*, possibly an allusion to Lev 18.5, or to Deut 30.6-20; Paul juxtaposes those passages in 10.5-7 (Gal 3.21). **11:** *Sin . . . deceived me*, Gen 3.13. **13:** *That sin might be shown to be sin*, 5.13.

ROMANS 7.11-8.5

mandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

¹³Did what is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

¹⁴For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.^a ¹⁵I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at

hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God; but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit^b of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin,^c he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.^b ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds

^a Gk sold under sin ^b Or spirit ^c Here the Greek word *you* is singular number; other ancient authorities read *me* or *us* ^d Or *and as a sin offering*

7.14-25: Even the disobedient acknowledge the rightness of the law's verdict. **14:** *The flesh*, where sin . . . dwells (vv. 17-20); the Dead Sea Scrolls similarly speak of the "dominion" of sin in the flesh (e.g., 1QH 4.25), or of the "evil impulse" that prevents the fulfillment of God's law, until God intervenes (1QH 13.6). **15-16:** *I do not do what I want*, this is not Paul's view of Christian existence (see 12.1-2), but an illustration of the point made in 2.15: The law declares God's valid judgment on all human conduct. **18:** *I cannot do it*, 8.4,7-8. **25:** The "I" is hypothetical; Paul has already declared that those baptized into Christ are "no longer . . . enslaved to sin" (6.6).

8.1-39: Life in the Spirit. A turning point in the letter, summing up Paul's previous argument (*therefore*, v. 1) and serving as a foil for the dramatic appeal that follows. **1-4:** The inclination of human *flesh* (see 5.20n.) has prevented earlier generations—including those who received the law at Mt. Sinai—from fulfilling the *just requirement of the law* (2.14-15,26). The law is thus *weakened by the flesh* (v. 3). Now that Christ has satisfied that *just requirement* through his own "act of righteousness" (5.18, translating the same Gk word), those who are *in Christ* or *in the Spirit* (v. 9) likewise fulfill the law's *requirement*, in that they walk . . . according to the Spirit (v. 4). **2:** *The law of the Spirit of life and of death*, Paul speaks not of two different laws, but of God's law experienced under two opposing dominions, of sin and of righteousness (6.12-14; 7.6). *The Spirit of life*, capitalized to refer to the "Spirit of God" (vv. 9,11,14; "the Spirit that is from God," 1 Cor 2.14). Paul can use the word "spirit" indefinitely (e.g., "a spirit of slavery . . . a spirit of adoption," v. 15), or personally (vv. 26-27; 1 Cor 2.10-14). The latter use is capitalized in Christian convention, i.e., *the Holy Spirit* (5.5; 9.1; 1 Thess 4.8). **3:** *God has done what the law . . . could not do*, Jews in Paul's day regarded Israel's subjection to unjust powers as realizing God's curses on the disobedient (9.31; 10.3). Paul sees Israel's destiny as bound up with Christ's obedience (9.4-5). **5-17:** Life

ROMANS 8.6-8.25

on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit^a set their minds on the things of the Spirit.^a ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit^a is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit,^a since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit^a is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ^b from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through^c his Spirit that dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers and sisters,^d we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba!^e Father!" ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness^f

with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in^g hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes^h for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope

a Or spirit *b* Other ancient authorities read the Christ or Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ *c* Other ancient authorities read on account of *d* Gk brothers *e* Aramaic for Father *f* Or ^{15a} spirit of adoption, by which we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit itself bears witness *g* Or by *h* Other ancient authorities read awaits

in the Spirit and life in the flesh are contrasted. Paul thinks not of a sharp dualism of "spirit" or "mind" over body, but of different dispositions of the mind (vv. 5-7) corresponding to different ways of comporting one's body (6.12-19; 12.1-2). **7:** *Hostile to God*, 5.10. *Does not submit to God's law*, that is, to the law's "just requirement," which remains the standard of righteous living (v. 4; 2.14-15). **9-10:** Paul shifts from speaking of being "in Christ" (v. 1) or *in the Spirit* to having the Spirit or Christ dwell within oneself (6.22; 7.4). **11:** *He who raised Christ*, 4.17,24; 11.15. **13:** *Deeds of the body*, here Paul uses "body" interchangeably with *flesh*. See 6.6-8. **15-17:** *Adoption* by the Spirit: Those who live according to the Spirit (or by "faith," i.e., faithfulness, 4.12,16) are the *heirs* of the promises given to Abraham, even if not his descendants according to the flesh (4.1,11-14; Gal 4.5-7). **15:** *Abba*, an Aramaic word which Jesus may have used in his own prayer (Mk 14.36), was used in prayer by Gentile churches (Gal 4.6). **17:** *If . . . we suffer*, the tension between suffering and hope in the glory to come (5.3-5) is characteristic of the Christian life during "this present time" (v. 18; 12.12; 1 Cor 4.8-13).

8.18-39: *Suffering, and hope in God's promise*. God's purposes toward his children are much greater than the circumstances of *this present time* would indicate. This theme is crucial in chs 9-11. **19-22:** Paul shares an apocalyptic viewpoint that the present age is evil (see Gal 1.4), having been *subjected* by God to malevolent spiritual forces (v. 20; 1 Cor 15.20-28; Phil 3.21). **21:** Creation itself will participate in the liberation of the *children of God*. **22:** *Groaning in labor pains*, a frequent apocalyptic metaphor (2 Esd 4.42; 10.5-14; Mt 24.8; Mk 13.8; Jn 16.21-22). **23:** The inner testimony of the Spirit (vv. 16,26-27) is experienced as intense yearning and hope (5.1-5). *Adoption*, see 9.4n. **26-27:** If we "groan inwardly"

ROMANS 8.26-9.2

for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes^a with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷And God,^b who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit^a intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.^c

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good^d for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.^e ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand

of God, who indeed intercedes for us.^f ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

9 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit— ²I have great sorrow and

a Other ancient authorities add for us *b* Gk the one *c* Gk he or it *d* Gk according to God *e* Other ancient authorities read God makes all things work together for good, or in all things God works for good *f* Gk among many brothers *g* Or Is it Christ Jesus . . . for us?

(v. 23), it is because of the Spirit at work in our prayers, interceding *for the saints*. This dramatic language is resumed in 9.1-3. **28-30:** The alternative translations in the footnote represent the reading in our earliest manuscript. Paul means, not that all circumstances of this life are good for us (the lament in 8.36 is genuine), but that amid *all* these *things* God's purpose prevails. *Those . . . who are called*, preeminently Israel (9.4; 11.2); also all those who are "the children of the promise," including Gentiles (9.8,23-26). *Conformed to the image of his Son*, Phil 3.21; 2 Cor 4.4. Christ the *firstborn*, 1 Cor 15.20; Col 1.18. **31-39:** Previous assurances of God's love (5.1-11) are reaffirmed; despite all present adversities, God's purpose will prevail. **34:** The heavenly Christ *intercedes for us*, as in vv. 26-27 the Spirit intercedes for the saints. **35-36:** *Hardship . . . or sword*, very real afflictions, as Israel's experience testifies; Ps 44.22 is quoted.

Chapters 9-11: The certainty of God's purposes toward Israel. The preceding argument reaches its climax in these extraordinary chapters, which combine earnest emotional appeal (9.1-5; 10.1-2), exegetical argument (9.6-13,25-29,33; 10.5-13,15-21; 11.2-4,8-10), the mock dialogue of the diatribe (9.14,19-21,30-32; 10.14,18; 11.1,4,7,11; see 2.17n.), and the stark pronouncement style of the prophets (11.25-27). The dramatic contrast in tone between chs 8 and 9, and the continuity of theme across chs 8-11, confirm Paul's overarching purpose. Despite present appearances, God has not abandoned promises made to Israel (9.6; 11.1,11-12,29). The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead (10.6-9) can restore Israel as well (11.15,23).

9.1-5: Paul's anguish for Israel is deeply personal—he speaks of his *own people* (v. 3)—yet also grounded in God's *promises* (v. 4). **1:** A solemn oath, confirmed by the Spirit (8.16,23,26-27). **2-3:** Paul's willingness to be *cut off from Christ* for the sake of Israel is especially poignant after the assurance

ROMANS 9.3-9.20

unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people,^a my kindred according to the flesh. ⁴They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; ⁵to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah,^b who is over all, God blessed forever.^c Amen.

⁶It is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel, ⁷and not all of Abraham's children are his true descendants; but "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you."⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants. ⁹For this is what the promise said, "About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son."¹⁰ Nor is that all; something similar happened to Rebecca when she had conceived children by one husband, our ancestor Isaac. ¹¹Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose of election might continue, ¹²not by works but by his call) she was

told, "The elder shall serve the younger."¹³ As it is written,

"I have loved Jacob,
but I have hated Esau."

¹⁴What then are we to say? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵For he says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whom I
have mercy,
and I will have compassion on
whom I have compassion."

¹⁶So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. ¹⁷For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth."¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.

¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why then does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" ²⁰But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "Why

a Gk *my brothers* *b* Or *the Christ* *c* Or *Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever; or Messiah: May he who is God over all be blessed forever*

in 8.39. ⁴: *To them belong the adoption*, lit. "sonship." The same Gk word appeared in 8.15,23. Paul's point is not that the people of Israel are more "naturally" God's children (vv. 6-9; 4.11-12), but that their "sonship" (see Ex 4.22-23; Hos 11.1) is prior to that of the Gentiles called in Christ (11.17-24). *The glory*, Ex 16.10; 24.16-17. *The covenants*, plural because several are recorded in scripture (Gen 15.8; 17.2,7,9; Ex 2.24). *Giving of the law*, Israel's privilege (2.17-20). *The worship*, Israel's covenant obligation (Ex 3.12; 4.23). *The promises, of the land* (see Gen 15.7; Ex 6.8), or more broadly "the world" (4.13). ⁵: *The patriarchs*, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, see Ex 2.24. *According to the flesh*, see 1.3; 15.8-9. *Messiah . . . God blessed forever*, whether Christ is called God here depends on the punctuation inserted (see note *c*). Similar Gk phrases are translated as spontaneous praise to God in 1.25; 11.36; 16.25-27.

^{9.6-29}: God's right to choose. Paul's concern to vindicate God's purpose of election (v. 11) runs throughout these verses, as rhetorical questions in vv. 14,19-24 and 30-32 show. ⁶: Paul means not to restrict the number of those who are "truly Israel," but to insist that being "Abraham's children" (v. 7) has never been a matter of physical descent (v. 8). Because the promise came to Abraham through faith (4.13), his "true descendants" are "children of the promise." ⁷: Though Abraham had other sons (Gen 25.2,12,19), only Isaac was his heir (Gen 21.2). ⁹: God's promise was given to Sarah (Gen 18.10), not Hagar; Gal 4.21-31. ¹⁰⁻¹²: God chose Jacob, not Esau (Gen 25.21,23), without regard to any human effort (v. 16). ¹³: Mal 1.2-3. ¹⁴⁻²⁹: If election is not the result of human merit, is God unjust? Paul rejects this conclusion, not by appealing to moral principle, but by affirming God's sovereignty. ¹⁵: Ex 33.19. ¹⁷⁻¹⁸: God chose Pharaoh (Ex 9.16), not because of merit, but to show God's power (see 11.7-12). *Hardens the heart*, see Ex 4.21; Deut 2.30; Josh 11.20. ¹⁹⁻²¹: Paul draws his conclusion in diatribe style, using biblical metaphors; see Isa 29.16; 45.9; Jer 18.6; Wis 15.7. ²²⁻²⁴: *Objects of wrath, sinners toward*

ROMANS 9.21-10.5

have you made me like this?" ²¹Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? ²²What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; ²³and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—²⁴including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people I
will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will
call 'beloved.'"

²⁶"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they shall be called children of the living God."

²⁷And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; ²⁸for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively."²⁹ And as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of hosts had not left
survivors^b to us,
we would have fared like Sodom
and been made like Gomorrah."

whom God has shown *patience*, as in 2.4-5; 3.25-26. Mortals may not presume God's judgment on others, to vindicate or to condemn (see 8.1; 11.30-32; 14.3-4,10-13). ²⁵⁻²⁶: Hosea spoke of the redemption of Israel (Hos 2.23; 1.10). Paul applies the passage to those God has called, *Jews and Gentiles* alike (v. 24). ²⁷⁻²⁹: God's preservation of a *remnant* in Israel (Isa 10.22; 1.9) shows God's faithfulness (see 11.1-6). The word *only* does not appear in Gk.

^{9.30-11.12}: *What went wrong?* Paul addresses the surprising circumstances of Israel and the Gentiles. ^{9.30-33}: A fixed footrace. The Greek "dioklein" ("strive for") can mean "chase after" as in a race. The Gentiles' success and Israel's failure to reach the goal or finish line have nothing to do with effort. Israel *stumbled over the stumbling stone*, tripped up, as it were, by God (v. 33; 11.7-8). ³²: Israel approached the law on the basis of *works* (3.20,27). Paul speaks here (and in 10.3) not of the desire to obey the law, but of the danger of boasting in one's own righteousness (Deut 8.17; 9.4-5). ³³: Isa 8.14-15; 28.16. Other early Christians interpreted these verses in relation to Christ (1 Pet 2.6-8; Mt 21.42). For Paul, the *stone laid in Zion* may be the law itself. ^{10.1-3}: See 9.1-5. ³: In Paul's view, Israel was *ignorant* in failing to submit to *God's righteousness*, i.e., the righteousness offered through the "faith of Jesus Christ" (see 3.22n.). ⁴: *The end of the law* almost certainly means its goal, not its termination (3.31; 7.12,16,22; 9.30-32). ⁵⁻¹³: Using a common Jewish technique, Paul interprets one passage of scripture (Lev 18.5)

³⁰What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; ³¹but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. ³²Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,³³ as it is written,

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone that
will make people stumble, a
rock that will make them fall,
and whoever believes in him^c will
not be put to shame."

10 Brothers and sisters,^d my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

⁵Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live

a Other ancient authorities read *for he will finish his work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make the sentence shortened on the earth*
b Or *descendants*; Gk *seed* *c* Or *trusts in it*
d Gk *Brothers*

ROMANS 10.6–11.3

by them.”⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down)⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say?

“The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);⁹ because^a if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.”¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.¹³ For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?¹⁵ And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”¹⁶ But not all have obeyed the good news;^b for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?”¹⁷ So faith comes from what

is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.^c

¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for

“Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”

¹⁹ Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,

“I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”

²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

“I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”

²¹ But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; I

a Or namely, that b Or gospel c Or about Christ; other ancient authorities read of God

in light of others (Deut 30.11–14; cf. Ps 107.26). **5–7:** *The righteousness . . . from the law and from faith* are not opposed, since there is only “God’s righteousness” (10.3). The promise of life to *the person who does these things* (Lev 18.5) requires not human effort to produce the messiah, but faith in the messiah whom God has sent. Such is Paul’s christological reading of Deut 30.11–14. **9–13:** Salvation through “faith” (1.15–17). **11:** Isa 28.16. **12:** *No distinction*, see 3.22,29. **13:** Joel 2.32. Early Christians often applied to Jesus biblical references to the *Lord*, references which in their original context refer to God. **14–21:** God’s faithfulness to Israel continues as *good news* is preached to them. **15:** Isa 52.17. **16:** Isa 53.1: *But not all have obeyed*, the disobedience of some in Israel does not alter God’s faithfulness (see 3.3). *Good news*, the same word is elsewhere translated “gospel”; see 1.16n. **18:** Ps 19.4. **19:** Deut 32.21. Israel’s disobedience does not indicate God’s failure; to the contrary, God’s purpose is to make Israel jealous. **20–21:** See 11.11–12. The Gentiles are the “foolish nation” (Deut 32.21), *those who did not seek me* (Isa 65.1–2). *All day long*, Paul emphasizes God’s persistent faithfulness to a disobedient Israel.

11.1–12: God has preserved a remnant. Paul himself is evidence that *God has not rejected his people*. **2–5:** The *divine reply* to the prophet Elijah was a rebuke for presuming he alone was left (1 Kings 19.10,18). Similarly, the *remnant* in Paul’s day does not exhaust God’s gracious purpose (see vv. 12,15,25–27). **7–12:** Astonishingly, Paul concludes Israel *failed* (9.31–10.4) because they were *hard-*

ROMANS 11.4–11.22

alone am left, and they are seeking my life.”⁴ But what is the divine reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.^a

⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,⁸ as it is written, “God gave them a sluggish spirit, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.”

⁹ And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and keep their backs forever bent.”

¹¹ So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling^b salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel^c jealous. ¹² Now if their stumbling^b means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the

Gentiles, I glorify my ministry¹⁴ in order to make my own people^d jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!¹⁶ If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy.

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root^e of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹ You will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud, but stand in awe. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you.^f ²² Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you

a Other ancient authorities add But if it is by works, it is no longer on the basis of grace, otherwise work would no longer be work b Gk transgression c Gk them d Gk my flesh e Other ancient authorities read the richness f Other ancient authorities read neither will he spare you

ened by God (9.18). **8:** Isa 29.10. **9:** Ps 69.22–23. **11–12:** Previous rhetorical questions concerned God’s righteousness or faithfulness (3.3,29; 9.14,19); now Paul asks about God’s faithfulness to the covenant with Israel. The obedience of the Gentiles will *make Israel jealous* (see 10.19–20). *Their full inclusion*, see vv. 15,26.

11.13–36: A warning to the Gentile Christians of Rome. The climax of chs 9–11, these verses reveal the heart of the letter’s purpose. Paul is obliged as apostle to the Gentiles to address the Christians of Rome (see 1.1–13), and to pronounce the solemn warning that follows (see 15.14–16). **13:** *I glorify my ministry*, 15.18–21. **14:** *To make my own people jealous*, and thus, probably, to elicit their acceptance of the Christ (10.14–21). **15:** *Life from the dead*, see v. 23. **16:** The remnant preserved by God (see 9.27–29; 11.1–5), like a portion of *dough* offered in worship (Num 15.18–21) or the *root* of a tree (Jer 11.16–17), guarantees God’s continuing care for the whole of Israel.

11.17–24: The metaphor of the olive tree. The tree, root and branches, is Israel (Jer 11.16; Hos 14.6); the *wild olive shoot* (v. 17) represents the Gentiles who believe in Christ. **17:** *Broken off*, the passive voice here and in vv. 19–20 reflects divine action (see v. 21). **18:** The ingrafting, “contrary to nature” (v. 24), of a *wild olive shoot* would give life to the shoot, but would not benefit the root. *Do not boast*, the tone of warning earlier (2.17n.) reaches its target here. **19–21:** Paul concedes the Gentile-Christian perception that *branches were broken off*, but warns against pride (see 12.3). **22:** *The kindness . . . severity*, 2.4–10.

ROMANS 11.23-12.3

also will be cut off. ²³And even those of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree.

²⁵ So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

“Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”

²⁷ “And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

²⁸ As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; ²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they

too may now receive mercy. ³²For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

³³ O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to

a Gk lacks of Israel *b* Gk brothers *c* Gk lacks of God *d* Other ancient authorities lack now *e* Or reasonable *f* Gk age *g* Or what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God

²⁴: If ingrafting a *wild olive tree* is unusual, restoring branches that have been broken off is nothing less than miraculous (11.15,26; 4.17n.). *Natural branches*, deriving from the stock of Israel (9.6n.).

11.25-36: The hardening of Israel. A warning against Gentile-Christian arrogance, the heart of the letter (see 2.1-4; 3.27; 12.3). **25**: I want you to understand, such solemn disclosures indicate Paul's concerns in his letters (1 Cor 10.1-6; 12.1; 2 Cor 1.8; 1 Thess 4.13). *This mystery*, a truth revealed by God (Dan 2.18-30,47; 1 Cor 2.7; 13.2; 14.2). A *hardening*, vv. 7-8; 9.18. This hardening is temporary, until the full number of the Gentiles, those destined to trust in God, has come in. **26**: Isa 59.20-21; 27.9. *All Israel*, in view already in 11.16,23. *Saved*, delivered from *ungodliness* and forgiven their “sins.” **28-32**: God's mysterious course of action fulfills the election of Israel (3.2; 9.6; 11.1) and precludes the possibility of human boasting (v. 32; 3.9-30). **34**: Isa 40.13. **35**: Job 35.7; 41.11. **36**: A doxology, as at 1.25; 9.5; 16.25-27.

12.1-15.13: Exhortation to holy living. On the basis of the argument in previous chapters, Paul now exhorts the Christians of Rome to right conduct. **12.1**: Holy living is *spiritual worship* (15.15-16), the opposite of “ungodliness” (1.21-28), made possible through baptism (6.12-23). Paul makes his “appeal” (the Gk phrase marks exhortations in his letters: 1 Cor 1.10; 2 Cor 10.1; 1 Thess 4.1; Philem 9) on the basis of the mercies of God (11.22-23,30-32) and the “grace given” to him as apostle (v. 3; 1.5; 15.15). **2**: Christians are to live no longer as belonging to *this world* (Gal 1.4; Phil 2.15; 1 Cor 7.29-31). The *renewing of . . . minds*, possible because of baptism (6.4), enables discerning the will of God (see Phil 1.9; 3.8-9). **3-8**: A warning against arrogance. **3**: I say, direct speech echoes 11.1,11,13. *Not to think . . . more highly*, similar Gk phrases are translated “do not become proud” in 11.20, and “do not be haughty”

ROMANS 12.4-13.4

everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; ^bdo not claim to be wiser than you

are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; ⁴for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what

a Other ancient authorities read *serve the opportune time* *b* Or give yourselves to humble tasks *c* Gk the wrath

in v. 16. **4-8**: Gifts are given to nourish the community as *one body in Christ*; 1 Cor 12.4-31 provides a similar list.

12.9-21: Goodwill within the community and without. **9-10**: *Love*, 13.8-10; 1 Cor 13. **12**: *Hope* and patience in *suffering*, see 5.3-5; 8.18-39. **13**: *Hospitality* was a crucial virtue in the early churches (see 16.1-2; Heb 13.2; 3 Jn 5-8). **14**: Here and in vv. 17,21, Paul may allude to sayings of Jesus (Mt 5.44). **16**: See v. 3n. *The lowly*, almost certainly people (despite the alternative in note *b*), as in Lk 1.52; Jas 1.9; the same Gk word is translated “humble” in Mt 11.29; Jas 4.6; 1 Pet 5.5. **17**: Mt 5.44. **19**: Deut 32.35. *Wrath*, see 2.5n. **20**: *To heap burning coals . . . makes enemies feel ashamed and perhaps remorseful* (Prov 25.21-22). **21**: Mt 5.39.

13.1-7: Subjection to governing authorities. Sometimes read as Paul's “theology of the state,” these verses stand in tension with his view elsewhere of the “rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2.6-8; 15.24-26; 1 Thess 5.3-11), and with his own willingness to suffer punishment from civil authorities (2 Cor 11.23,25-27). This teaching is conventional (Wis 6.1-3; 1 Pet 2.13-17; 3.13), and there are other attitudes to civil authorities in the New Testament (Acts 5.29; Rev 13.2,5,11-18). These verses may have had a very specific application (see the Introduction). **1**: Empires rise and fall by the will of God (Isa 10.5-6; Jer 27.4-8,11; Dan 3.28-32). *Instituted*, lit. “put in their place”; the Gk word is related to the word translated *be subject*. **2**: Do not resist authority; contrast 12.2. *Resists what God has appointed*, 8.7; 9.19. **3-4**: The proper role of civil authorities; Paul was aware they could act otherwise. *God's servant*, Jer 27.6 (the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar). The authority may punish; the individual Christian may not (12.19-21). *The sword*, a symbol of power over life and death (see 8.35). *Wrath*, elsewhere usually “the wrath of God” (1.18; 2.5; 5.9). **5-6**: Proper civil behavior is motivated both by fear of “wrath” (but

ROMANS 13.5-14.10

is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority^a does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. ⁶For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

see v. 3) and *conscience*. 6-7: *Taxes*, the Roman tribute (as in Mt 22.21; Mk 12.17; Lk 20.25), from which Roman citizens were exempt. *Revenue*, commercial taxes. *Respect*, lit. "fear"; the same word is translated "terror" in v. 3. The one to whom *respect*, or *fear*, is *due* may be God alone (1 Pet 2.17).

13.8-14: Other exhortations. 8-10: *Love* fulfills the law, 2.14; 8.4; 12.9; Mt 22.39-40; Mk 12.31; Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8; 1 Jn 4.11. 9: Ex 20.13-17; Deut 5.17-21; Lev 19.18. 11-14: *Imminent salvation*, i.e., the return of Christ, makes it urgent to *wake* to holy and honorable living (1 Thess 5.1-11; Eph 5.8-18). 14: *Put on the Lord Jesus*, an early Christian metaphor for baptism (Gal 3.27).

14.1-15.13: Exhortations regarding those who observe Torah. The observance of special days (vv. 5-6) and a kosher diet (vv. 2,14n.) are marks of Jewish observance. The Gentile Christians of Rome must not *despise* the observant (v. 3). 1-12: *Tolerance for others' observance*. 1-2: Those who *eat only vegetables* are most likely keeping kosher by avoiding "unclean" meat (v. 14), or meat "sacrificed to idols" (Acts 15.29; 1 Cor 8.1; Dan 1.3-16; Esth 3.28; 14.17; Jdt 12.1-2). Paul calls them *weak in faith* (or "conviction"), not because they adhere to the Torah (see vv. 4,6; 7.12), but because they are scandalized by Gentile Christians who eat non-kosher food (vv. 13,15,20). 4: *The Lord is able*, 11.23. 5-9: *Jews and Gentiles can*, each in their own way, *live in honor of the Lord*. 11: Isa 45.23. 13-23: *Freedom is not*

14 Welcome those who are weak in faith,^b but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ²Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord^c is able to make them stand.

⁵Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?^d Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?^d For we

a Gk *it* b Or *conviction* c Other ancient authorities read *for God* d Gk *brother*

ROMANS 14.11-15.11

will all stand before the judgment seat of God.^e ¹¹For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to^f God."

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.^g

¹³Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.^d ¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵If your brother or sister^e is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. ¹⁹Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. ²⁰Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; ²¹it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister^e stumble.^f ²²The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. ²³But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith;^g for whatever does not proceed from faith^h is sin.^b

15 We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ²Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. ³For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." ⁴For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

"Therefore I will confessⁱ you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name";

¹⁰and again he says,

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people";

¹¹and again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him";

a Other ancient authorities read *of Christ*
b Or *confess* c Other ancient authorities lack *to God* d Gk *of a brother* e Gk *brother* f Other ancient authorities add *or be upset or be weakened*
g Or *conviction* h Other authorities, some ancient, add here 16.25-27 i Or *thank*

license to give offense. 13: *Stumbling block . . . hindrance*, 9.32-33; 1 Cor 8.9. 14: *Nothing is unclean in itself*, lit. "common," as opposed to "clean" (v. 20; 1 Macc 1.47,62; Mk 7.19; Acts 10.14; 11.8). For the observant, however, non-kosher food is *unclean*. 17: *The kingdom of God*, a rare phrase in Paul's letters (1 Cor 4.20; 6.9-10). 19: *Peace . . . mutual upbuilding*, 1 Cor 14.3-5,12,26. 20-23: Faith does not allow one to violate the conscience of others, e.g., by encouraging them to act against their conscience. 15.1-13: Christ's example. 1: *Put up with the failings of the weak*, lit. "sustain the powerless in their weaknesses" (Gal 6.2). 2-3: Ps 69.9 is read in terms of Christ's humbling himself (Phil 2.5-8; 2 Cor 8.9). 4: See 4.23-25; 1 Cor 9.10. 5-6: The goal of Paul's exhortation is that Gentiles and Jews should *with one voice glorify . . . God*. 8: Christ came to *confirm the promises* given to Israel (9.3-5). 9: Ps 18.49. 10: Deut 32.43. 11: Ps 117.1. 12: Isa 11.10. (The Gk word for *Gentiles* in vv. 9-12 also means "nations.")

ROMANS 15.12-15.31

¹²and again Isaiah says,
 “The root of Jesse shall come,
 the one who rises to rule
 the Gentiles;
 in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters,^a that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. ¹⁵Nevertheless on some points I have written to you rather boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. ¹⁸For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished^b through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God,^c so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news^d of Christ. ²⁰Thus I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news,^d not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, ²¹but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of
 him shall see,
 and those who have never heard of
 him shall understand.”

²²This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you ²⁴when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. ²⁵At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; ²⁶for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. ²⁸So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected,^e I will set out by way of you to Spain; ²⁹and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing^f of Christ.

³⁰I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,^a by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, ³¹that I may

a Gk brothers *b* Gk speak of those things that Christ has not accomplished *c* Other ancient authorities read of the Spirit or of the Holy Spirit *d* Or gospel *e* Gk have sealed to them this fruit *f* Other ancient authorities add of the gospel

15.14-32: The letter's argument brought to a close. **14-16:** Despite confidence in the Romans (1.8,11,12), Paul has written *boldly*, compelled by the *grace* given him (1.5). **16:** *Minister . . . priestly service*, Paul will present a holy *offering* to God, i.e., the Gentile Christians themselves (1.9; 12.2). **17-32:** The broader context of Paul's apostolate. As at the letter's beginning (1.1-15), Paul links his letter to the Romans with his *work for God*. **19:** *Signs and wonders*, 1 Cor 12.10; 2 Cor 12.12; Gal 3.5. *Illyricum*, a Roman province on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea, mentioned only here. *Good news*, see 1.16n. **21:** Isa 52.15. **22-29:** Travel plans and further requests. **23:** *No further place*, Paul sees himself as a herald more than a pastor. **24:** Paul says nothing now of wishing to “proclaim the gospel” to the Romans (1.10-15); perhaps this letter has done that. **25-29:** The *ministry to the saints*, the collection mentioned in 1 Cor 16.1-4; 2 Cor 8-9; Gal 2.10. **26:** *Macedonia and Achaia*, Roman provinces in Greece. **30-33:** *Apprehensions regarding Jerusalem*. The Roman Christians may participate in the “offering of the Gentiles” (v. 16) through their own holiness (12.2) and their *earnest prayer* for Paul. The *unbelievers in Judea*, Jews who have not believed in Jesus (9.1-5; 10.1-2,14), are the ultimate targets of his work (11.13-14). On the fate of this *ministry to Jerusalem*, see Acts 21.7-28.31.

ROMANS 15.32-16.21

be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry^a to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³²so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³The God of peace be with all of you.^b Amen.

16 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon^c of the church at Cenchreae, ²so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well.

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, ⁴and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert^d in Asia for Christ. ⁶Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junia,^e my relatives^f who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. ⁸Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. ¹⁰Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. ¹¹Greet my relative^g Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. ¹²Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the

beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother—a mother to me also. ¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters^h who are with them. ¹⁵Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

¹⁷I urge you, brothers and sisters,^b to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. ¹⁸For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,ⁱ and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. ¹⁹For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil. ²⁰The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.^j

²¹Timothy, my co-worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.^j

a Other ancient authorities read my bringing of a gift
b One ancient authority adds 16.25-27 here
c Or minister *d* Gk first fruits *e* Or Junias; other ancient authorities read Julia *f* Or compatriots
g Or compatriot *h* Gk brothers *i* Gk their own belly *j* Other ancient authorities lack this sentence

16.1-23: A recommendation and greetings. **1:** Some early manuscripts do not include 16.1-24; these verses nevertheless appear to be an authentic part of the letter (see also 16.25-27n.). **1-2:** Paul commends Phoebe, an officer of a nearby church, to the hospitality and support of the Roman Christians, thus honoring his obligations to her as his *benefactor*. On the early Christian office of *deacon*, see Phil 1.1; 1 Tim 3.8,12; Titus 1.9. **3-16:** A list of greetings shows Paul's personal connections with the Roman congregations. Most of the individuals named are mentioned only here. **3-4:** *Prisca and Aquila*, identified in Acts 18.2 as exiles from Rome, now returned (1 Cor 16.19; 2 Tim 4.19). **5:** Christian congregations first met in private homes (vv. 14,15; Philem 2). **7:** *Junia*, a woman; many manuscripts read “Junias,” an otherwise unattested male Latin name; our earliest manuscript reads “Julia.” *Relatives*, fellow Jews (vv. 11,21; 9.3). *The apostles*, Paul uses the term to mean more than the twelve (see 1 Cor 15.5,7; Phil 2.25). **13:** *A mother to me also*, an expression of affection. **16:** *A holy kiss*, a regular part of worship in the early church (1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12; 1 Thess 5.26; 1 Pet 5.14).

16.17-20: A warning. *Those who cause dissensions*, otherwise unidentified, are clearly less central to the letter's purpose than those referred to in 1 Cor 5.1-13 or Gal 1.8-9; 6.17. *The teaching*, 6.17. **19:** 1.8. **20:** A concluding blessing (1 Cor 16.23; 1 Thess 5.28). **21:** *Timothy*, introduced in Acts 16.1-3. **22:**

ROMANS 16.22-16.27

22 I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord.^a

23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother, Quartus, greet you.^b

25 Now to God^c who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages²⁶ but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings

Tertius wrote the letter as Paul dictated it; cf. 1 Pet 5.12. 23: *Gaius*, perhaps the same person mentioned in 1 Cor 1.14.

16.25-27: A concluding blessing, appearing in different ancient manuscripts after 14.23 or 15.33, or missing altogether. Many consider these verses an addition by later scribes and editors. 25: *My gospel*, 2.16. *The proclamation*, the Gk "kerygma" is another word for "gospel"; see 1 Cor 1.21-24. 25-26: *Mystery*, 11.25-27. *The obedience of faith*, 1.5.

is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom^d be the glory forever! Amen.^e

a Or I Tertius, writing this letter in the Lord, greet you *b* Other ancient authorities add verse 24, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.* *c* Gk the one *d* Other ancient authorities lack to whom. The verse then reads, *to the only wise God be the glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.* *e* Other ancient authorities lack 16.25-27 or include it after 14.23 or 15.33; others put verse 24 after verse 27

The First Letter of Paul to the CORINTHIANS

First Corinthians offers a fascinating window into the struggles of one Christian community at an early stage in the history of the movement that developed into Christianity. Paul's attempts to persuade the Corinthians to see and do things his way reveals how difficult it was for people rooted in the Hellenistic culture of a large metropolis such as Corinth to assimilate Paul's gospel of Christ and its implications for personal and community life as well as for their relations with the larger Roman imperial society.

The city of Corinth had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 BCE for leading the resistance to Roman incursion into Greece. It was rebuilt in 44 BCE as a colony to which the Roman patricians sent surplus population from Rome itself, such as recently freed slaves, displaced peasants, and army veterans. Corinth quickly developed into a busy hub of east-west trade in the empire and the center of Roman imperial culture in Greece. Except for Antioch in Syria, where Paul was based at the beginning of his mission to various peoples of the eastern Mediterranean, Corinth was the first major urban center to which Paul brought his mission. For eighteen months (Acts 18.11), with several coworkers such as Timothy and Silvanus, Prisca (Priscilla) and her husband Aquila, and Phoebe, leader of the community at nearby Cenchræe, he organized and taught in house-assemblies of Corinthians. Believers came together periodically as a "whole assembly" (church) to celebrate the Lord's Supper. After Paul moved across the Aegean to work in the city of Ephesus, another missionary, Apollos, an eloquent Hellenistic Jew from Alexandria in Egypt, also taught in the community at Corinth.

First Corinthians was written in Ephesus (16.8) in the early 50s CE. Paul was responding both to a letter from the Corinthians (see 7.1; 8.1; 12.1) and to news he had received through "Chloe's people" (1.11). The letter begins with the usual address, greeting, and opening thanksgiving (1.1-9) and ends with the standard closing exhortation, greetings, and grace (16.13-24). The body of the letter consists of a series of issues over which the Corinthian community was experiencing internal conflict: divisions within the community connected with the claims by some to possess a superior wisdom (1.10-4.21); how to deal with a man living with his stepmother (ch 5); on not taking disputes to the official courts (ch 6); on marriage and sexual relations (6.12-7.40); on eating food sacrificed to idols (8.1-11.1); on hair arrangement when prophesying (11.2-16); on procedure at celebration of the Lord's Supper (11.17-34); on the use of spiritual gifts, particularly "tongues" (chs 12-14); on the resurrection of the dead (ch 15). The letter concludes with Paul's arrangements for a collection to help the church in Jerusalem, and his travel plans (16.1-12).

Much of the language that Paul uses in dealing with issues in 1 Corinthians is very different from that in his other letters. That suggests that the opinions he confronts in 1 Corinthians were distinctive to the Corinthians among the various communities Paul founded (and perhaps had something to do with Apollos's ministry in Corinth after Paul had gone to Ephesus). Indeed, it appears from the way Paul uses some of these distinctive terms that some of the Corinthians understood themselves as "spiritual" and "mature," as opposed to merely "unspiritual" or "physical" and "infants" (2.6,14-15; 3.1; 15.44,46) and as "wise," "powerful," "of noble birth," "rich," and "kings," as op-