

THE LETTER to the ROMANS

ALSOM

ORIENTING INFORMATION ...

Content: A letter of teaching and direction explaining Paul's understanding of the Gospel – that Jews and Gentiles together form one people of God, based on God's righteousness received through faith in Jesus Christ as empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Author: the apostle Paul

Date: Approximately 57 AD, written from Corinth (Rom 15:25-26, 1 Cor 16:1-7).

Recipients: The church in Rome. This church was not founded by Paul and was not under his jurisdiction. He did know at least 26 people in the church and greeted them (16:3-16).

Occasion (reason the letter was written): There were three motivating factors ...

1. Phoebe's impending visit to Rome (where she would participate in the house church meeting in the home of Paul's friends Priscilla and Aquila, 16:3-5; Phoebe would deliver the letter).
2. Paul's anticipated visit to Rome where he looked forward to ministering to them and also to them helping him with his desired mission to Spain (15:17-29).
3. Information brought to Paul in Corinth concerning the Roman church and the tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers there.

Paul wrote to explain the relationship of Law to Gospel, Jew to Gentile, Israel to the Church, how this all determines relationships in the local church, and God's redemptive mission to the nations.

Themes / Emphases:

Although Israel has been unfaithful, God has been faithful to his Promises through Messiah Jesus and those who follow him: He has redeemed and restored True Israel in Jesus and those who believe in him.

1. In Christ, Jews and Gentiles together form one unified people of God.
2. The role of the Jews in God's salvation through Jesus Christ.
3. Salvation by grace alone, received through faith in Christ Jesus and effected by the Holy Spirit.
4. The failure of the Law and the success of the Spirit in producing true righteousness.
5. The need to be transformed in mind by the Spirit in order to live in unity as God's people.

Overview:

The Gospel reached Rome within a few years after Pentecost. We have no definite record of how, when, or by whom the gospel was first preached there. For several years the church was predominantly Jewish believers, with the number of Gentile believers in the minority. The church had a Jewish flavor and Jewish leadership.

There was friction between the unbelieving Jews in Rome and the Messianic Jews and Gentiles worshipping with them. It led to public disturbances or riots, something the Roman Empire did not tolerate. The Roman historian Suetonius, and the Christian historian Luke, described the disturbances and the result. ...

“Since the Jews were constantly rioting under the leadership of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.” *Suetonius, Lives of the Twelve Caesars, (Claudius 25.4)*

“After these things he [Paul] left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.” (*Luke* in Acts 18:1-2)

Suetonius got the name wrong slightly, using a Roman name that sounded like the Greek “Christus” or **Christ**.

SO, in 49 AD the Emperor Claudius issued that edict expelling all Jews from Rome. This would have included Jewish Christians.

In 54 AD Claudius died, the edict lapsed, and the Jews – including Jewish Christians – began returning to Rome. The Christian movement had grown and was now predominantly Gentile under Gentile leadership. There was tension between the groups on the issues mentioned above. The unbelieving Jews would have been more hostile to the Christians – especially the Jewish Christians – than ever before, considering Jesus a false messiah and blaming the Christians for Claudius’ edict.

There is now tension between the Jewish and Gentile believers in the Roman church. They are probably meeting in separate house churches ... Gentiles meeting in Gentile house churches, Jews meeting in Jewish house churches.

(NOTE: The Letter to the Hebrews was also occasioned by this growing friction between Jews and Christians, both in Rome and elsewhere. Hebrews was written to show the passing of the Old Covenant, how the New Covenant was far better (always God’s plan), why Jewish believers should not become discouraged over their rejection and persecution by unbelieving Jews, and why they should not give up going to church entirely just because of all this (Hebrews 10:25).)

Christianity existed in small house churches across the Empire, and it was essential that the local churches live in unity. The total number of Jesus followers in Rome alone in 57-58 AD would have been no more than 200-300 at the most (see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*), a very small percentage of the city’s population. The total number of Christians in the entire Empire by 100 AD (40 years after this letter) would have been no more than 7,500 to 10,000.

The Gentile believers were now not keeping to the Old Covenant “Identity Markers” that Jews were supposed to keep, and that the Jewish Christians were still keeping, and wanted the Gentile believers to keep as well. There were **THREE BASIC IDENTITY MARKERS** that the Diaspora Jews kept in order to maintain their distinctiveness ... (Note: Diaspora = Dispersion, all Jews dispersed beyond Palestine, into the Empire.)

1. Circumcision (2:25-3:1, 4:9-12)
2. Sabbath observance (cease all work, attend Synagogue, on Saturday) (14:1-23)
3. Food Laws (14:1-23)

*In other words, what are the boundary markers, the identifying characteristics or behaviors that now mark people as members of God’s family. Must we DO these things – the works of the Law – in order to be justified, to be in right-standing with God ... **BOTH as a People and as individuals.***

The Practical Question: Whether either Jewish or Gentile believers have to practice these three observances in order to follow Jesus.

The Theological Question: Whether God’s righteousness – God’s righteous salvation that gives believers right-standing with God – comes by obeying / doing the Law or comes by faith in Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit (when we are re-generated by the Spirit at salvation). T

(The Corollary Questions:

- a. If God’s righteousness (salvation) comes by grace through faith, is that true for both Jews and Gentiles?
- b. If that is true for both Jews and Gentiles, then does God have only one way of salvation and only one true people?)

Throughout Romans, as he often does in his letters, **Paul is making an argument – making a case – for and against certain things** bearing on the current situation of that particular local church. ...

The all-important GOAL driving Paul’s argument grows directly from the problem of disunity and strife between the Jewish and Gentile believers: The critical and essential need for **UNITY** in the Body of Christ. This all-important GOAL OF UNITY that is driving Paul’s argument from beginning to end (1:16-15:13) **is seen at the conclusion of the letter**: “... that God might give Jewish and Gentile believers the “ ... **same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,**” so that together “...with **one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** (15:5-6). This is THE POINT or GOAL that Paul was arguing toward all along: the Genuine Unity of the Roman believers, Jew-and-Gentile, one people of God in Christ!

God’s will – and Paul’s desire – is that through the mind of Christ and the Holy Spirit’s empowering they will all have a sacrificial laying-down-their-lives-for-each-other covenant keeping love. This is what the Gospel and the Spirit will always be producing in yielded, obedient hearts: Close-knit Communities of Covenant-Keeping Love.

The FOCUS of Paul’s argument repeatedly is on what makes this UNITY possible: “God’s righteousness given to Jew and Gentile alike on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and put into effect by the gift of the Spirit to the believer.”

THIS ARGUMENT is divided into FOUR MAJOR PARTS as Paul flows through his discourse.

(NOTE: This is how Paul constructed his argument, which is somewhat different than the major divisions of the written Book of Romans itself.) (NOTE: Paul uses the subgenre of DIATRIBE to push his argument forward; SEE BELOW.)

Each Part of the argument ends on a confessional note that serves as a transition to the next part of the argument.

1. The Problem of Human Sinfulness (1:16 – 4:25).

- a. It’s Universality – Jew and Gentile alike; the Law gives no advantage to the Jew.
- b. Christ alone has dealt with sin effectively, once-for-all.
- c. Salvation – God’s righteousness – is based on grace alone through faith in Christ alone for all people, Jew and Gentile alike.
- d. Abraham is proof of this (4:16) and ...
 - i. He is the “father of ALL” who are God’s children by FAITH, and
 - ii. He is the father of ONLY those people who believe in Abraham’s seed, Jesus.

Transition: “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” ... leads into 5:1-11 explanation of the benefits of Justification.

2. Salvation (God’s righteousness) Comes through Christ, by the Spirit (5:12 – 8:30).

- a. Trusting Christ's victory over sin as our own.
- b. Receiving the gift of the Spirit (regeneration) to make Christ's victory real in OUR lives.
- c. The Law showed God's intent to save, but Law alone – and keeping the Law alone – had no power to deal with human sinfulness.

Transition: 8:28-30 ... leads into 8:31-39 explanation of God's covenant keeping love.

3. How God has been faithful to his promises – the faithful character of God to save (9:1 – 11:32).

- a. God promised to save Israel and the nations.
- b. Israel was unfaithful but continuing Jewish unbelief will not stop God's faithfulness.
- c. Therefore, God has a place for both Jews and Gentiles in his NEW "Olive Tree" (Jesus) (11:24-25).

Transition: 11:32 ... leads into 11:33-36, a doxology of praise to the all-wise God.

4. Salvation (God's righteousness) has practical results in his people (12:1 – 15:12).

- a. Salvation is worked IN us by Christ, & the indwelling Spirit the Father & Son have given.
- b. Salvation was never put into effect by the Law; it was powerless to save.
- c. This saving work of Christ and the Spirit changes us, including our ...
 - i. Relationships w/ other believers in the believing community, and
 - ii. Relationships beyond the believing community.

Transition: 15:9-12 ... leads into 15:13, a prayer to the God of hope for joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE GENRE OF ROMANS

AS ALWAYS, it is **essential** to recognize the genre – the kind of literature – we are reading if we are to understand it fully and correctly.

Paul was one of the best educated Jews in the Roman Empire in Scripture, Israel's history, and Greek culture. God chose him for because of his excellent education in both "worlds." Almost 90% of the New Testament was written by men who were well educated in Scripture, Israel's history, theology, and literary composition.

Because of what we know about the Church from the New Testament (NT) and the Empire, the early Christians were ...

- better educated and better readers than the average person,
- were mostly from the middle classes, with some from the upper classes,
- were mostly freemen, merchants, artisans, and business owners, and
- included some who were poor, some who were illiterate, and some who were servants or slaves.

The authors of the NT expected the leaders of the local churches (pastors / elders) and most of the people to understand the allusions to the OT, the Gospel, Israel's history, theology, and the various genres and literary techniques with which they wrote. Only by understanding all of this would the pastors/elders fully understand the apostles' writings and be able to teach God's people.

IN READING ROMANS CORRECTLY, THERE ARE TWO THINGS TO REMEMBER REGARDING THE GENRE and SUBGENRE used in writing Romans ...

1. GENRE – Epistle. Romans is an epistle / letter written to a church in a given place and time addressing specific issues in that particular setting (just like other NT epistles).

2. **DIATRIBE** – a form of teaching or making an argument (case) for something, explaining why that situation is the way it is, using particular techniques of teaching or argumentation.

FIRST ... (the first thing to remember when reading this Diatribe) ...

Romans is an **epistle / letter**, written largely in the form of a **DIATRIBE**.

Dia = Through Tribein – Rub, wear away

To spend time in a discourse or dissertation; going all the way through a subject, wearing away all relevant opposing points (cons), repeatedly emphasizing all positive points (pros).

Used to convince listeners / readers of the points the speaker / writer wants to make.

Imagined dialogue – speaking or writing as if you are in dialogue with someone, often doing this in the form of Questions and Answers between you (the author), and a listener / reader.

Imagined debate partner (interlocutor) – the author creates a imaginary interlocutor (discussion partner) who asks the author questions or makes points which the author then refutes and corrects.

Paul follows this Diatribe pattern consistently throughout Romans as he makes his case. ...

Paul's imaginary interlocutor(s) appear at key places through the course of Paul's argument.

Paul debates first with a Jew ...

2:1-5 2:17-24 8:2 9:19-21 11:17-24 14:4 14:10

Paul raises and answers questions, and Paul responds to anticipated objections, ...

2:26 3:1-9, 17-31 4:1-3 6:1-3, 15-16 7:1,7,13 8:31-35 9:19, ... etc.

A Gentile interlocutor is introduced in 11:13-24

When dialoging with both the Jewish and Gentile imaginary interlocutors, Paul begins his dialogue by attacking ethnic pride ... 2:17-20 (Jews), ... 11:18 (Gentiles).

NOTE: Paul suspends the diatribe genre when he begins to exhort / encourage the Roman believers at the beginning of Part 4 of the Argument: 12:1 – 13:14.

THEN, when the issue of Jew-Gentile problems over FOOD (14:4) and DAYS (14:10) comes up, he picks up the diatribe style again.

DIATRIBE as a genre can be confusing if you do not analyze it carefully according to its own rules.

For example, during the course of the argument, some sweeping individual statements may be made that appear to contradict other individual statements.

You must pay close attention to where and how ALL INDIVIDUAL STATEMENTS are made ...

Discern how they are fitting into the flow of the argument, ...

And see how they were actually being used after the whole argument is completed.

YOU MUST NOTE how words and phrases are used in the CONTEXT of particular statements, ...

And how they are used in the flow of the whole argument, in each particular sub-argument.

SECOND ... (the second thing to remember regarding reading the Diatribe) ...

The second thing to remember when reading a Diatribe, because it is a long extended argument making a case for something ...

The nature of how you make your case in a Diatribe is that ...

your speaking or writing lays out a logical sequence of **IDEAS or CONCEPTS**.

Your speaking / writing is laying out your IDEAS / CONCEPTS sequentially.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN that you are saying the experiences or events you are describing will necessarily be sequential in actual lived experience.

EXAMPLE: Paul is NOT necessarily intentionally dealing with the experience of justification first (ch 1-5), and then dealing with the experience of sanctification second (ch 6-8).

EXAMPLE: The role of the Holy Spirit is not examined in depth until 7:4-6, 8:1-30.

However, the Spirit's role was already anticipated in 2:28-29, 5:5.

The inadequacy of the Law is mentioned first in chapter 2, but this inadequacy is mentioned again in the context of Life in the Spirit at 7:7 – 8:4, and at 13:8-10.

The importance of the Spirit is discussed in 8:1-30, but that discussion makes it clear that the Spirit was assumed present and working in the discussion at 6:1-14.

The particular ethical issues discussed in chapters 12-14 presuppose the arguments already made in chapters 6 and 8. (IOW, chapters 12-14 can only be fully and correctly understood if you already understand what was said in chapters 6 and 8).

Ideas, concepts, experiences, etc., described in the CURRENT part of the Diatribe are being discussed NOW in order to lay a foundation for something that will be discussed further down in the argument, without what is being said NOW being explicitly referenced at that later point.

SO, YOU HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE FLOW OF THE CASE,
AND WAIT UNTIL THE ENTIRE ARGUMENT HAS BEEN MADE
BEFORE YOU COME TO A FINAL CONCLUSION
ON WHAT WAS MEANT IN A PARTICULAR PART OF THE DIATRIBE.

Paul does NOT present the ENTIRE GOSPEL at every turn, or in every Part of his argument.

He is **BUILDING an overall STRUCTURE one piece, one room, one floor at a time**.

THEN, when it is finished, you can understand how the WHOLE BUILDING fits together, and why each part was stated / constructed in the manner it was, and how it all fits together.

ILLUSTRATION: When constructing a building, you may not know that a particular wall is a “supporting” wall – or what it is there to support – until you get farther down into the building process. Then you will fully understand that this particular wall is essential to holding up the roof, that the roof depends on this wall, and that you could not have built the roof (made the statements made in the “roof”) unless you had correctly built this particular wall (made exactly the statements you made in building this supporting wall).

You may not fully understand what is meant by a Part (word-paragraph-passage-chapters) until you read farther into the argument. *The meaning in the Part is a logical flow within the particular genre of Diatribe*

Conversely, you cannot understand what is meant later in the argument unless you understand what was said earlier in the argument. *The meaning in the later Part is a logical flow within the particular genre of Diatribe.*

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LETTER to the ROMANS ITSELF and KEY PASSAGES IN THE ARGUMENT and THEOLOGY of ROMANS

(NOTE: The description above describes the Argumentation Divisions of the Diatribe.)

The following description discusses the divisions of the LETTER itself. There are some sections of the letter that depart from the Diatribe divisions, therefore the sections of the letter itself will contain more-and-less than the Diatribe.

In order to understand Romans, we MUST correctly understand Paul's argument as he addresses the Theological question and it's Corollaries mentioned above. That is the driving force of Romans.

We will examine key passages related to that key Theological Question and it's Two Corollary Questions.

I. PART 1: THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD – 1:1 – 5:11

- A. Salutation, Prayer, and Theme: God's Gospel and God's Righteousness
 - a. 1:1-7 – God's Gospel and Paul's Ministry
 - b. 1:8-15 – Thanksgiving, Prayer, and Paul's Desire to Come to Rome
 - c. 1:16-17 – God's Gospel Reveals God's Righteousness for all: Jews and Gentiles
- B. The Universality of Sin and Judgment, For Jew and Gentile, With or Without the Law
 - a. 1:18-32 – Gentile idolatry, injustice, and wickedness
 - b. 2:1-16 – God's Impartial Judgment Finds All People Guilty
 - c. 2:17-29 – The Law Offers No Advantage, For Jews Still Sin
 - d. 3:1-8 – Israel's Faithlessness and God's Faithfulness
 - e. 3:9-20 – The Law Condemns both Jew and Gentile
- C. God's Faithfulness to His Covenant
 - a. 3:21-26 – God's Righteousness Revealed in Jesus' Faithfulness
 - b. 3:27-31 – One God, One Faith, One People
 - c. 4:1-25 – The Covenant Family of Abraham
 - i. 4:1-8 – By Believing the Promise
 - ii. 4:9-15 – Not By Circumcision and Not By Torah
 - iii. 4:16-17 – The Whole Family, According to the Promise
 - iv. 4:18-22 – The God Who Gives Life to the Dead
 - v. 4:23-25 – The Meaning of the Christian Faith

In 1:1-17, Paul immediately forecasts the major themes of the whole book as he describes ...
 how God faithfully fulfilled his promises to Israel ...
 through the resurrection of Jesus, Son of David, ...
 through the power of the Holy Spirit, ...
 which Gospel calls even the Gentiles to the obedience, ...
 that comes through faith.

As is the custom in ancient letters, the salutation and prayer will forecast the rest of the letter.

A BIBLE READING SKILL: Note the commonly used hyperbole in **1:8** – “all over the world.” Hyperbolic phrases like this do **not** mean physically all over the world. They are a literary technique (a commonly used convention) of intentional exaggeration to make a point. Here, this particular hyperbole means, “in many places around the Empire.” Paul and the Roman believers knew very well that the vast majority of places just in the Empire itself (not to mention the lands outside the Empire) had **not** yet heard the Gospel. Later in this letter, Paul would mention his desire to preach in Spain where no one had preached. This same hyperbolic phrase is used in many places in Scripture, including Genesis 6 (the Flood), Genesis 41 (the Famine), Acts 2:5, Col 1:6, 1 Kgs 10:24, and Matt 24:14. Throughout OT and NT times, there was **no concept** of the Earth as a large planet or globe, with continents, thousands of people-groups, etc. Wherever it is used, this particular hyperbole normally means “in much of the ‘world’ that we ourselves are familiar with.” This is what they meant to say, and this is how the readers understood it.

In Chapters 1 – 4, Paul begins to argue his case by addressing fundamental issues ...

1. The Problem of Human Sinfulness (1:16 – 4:25).

- a. It’s Universality – Jew and Gentile alike; the Law gives no advantage to the Jew.
- b. Christ alone, the One Faithful Seed of Abraham, the One True Son, the One True Israel, ...
 - has dealt with sin effectively, once-for-all, ...
 - by perfectly keeping covenant and living the perfect life,
 - by offering the perfect sacrifice, ...
 - the final and sufficient sacrifice for all sin of Jew and Gentile, ...
 - and being raised from the dead in a supra-physical New Creation body,
 - all as our representative on our behalf.
- c. Salvation – God’s righteousness – is based on grace alone through faith in Christ alone for all people, Jew and Gentile **alike**.
- d. Abraham is proof of this (4:16) and ...
 - i. He is the “father of ALL” who are God’s children by FAITH, and
 - ii. He is the father of ONLY those people who believe in Abraham’s seed, Jesus.

In Chapters 2 and 4 Paul begins to address a fundamental question: ...

Who is a child of Abraham? Who are God’s People? Who are the heirs to the Promises?

Are ALL ethnic Jews – physical descendants of Abraham – True Israel and heirs?

Are those who try to keep PARTS of the Law Abraham’s Seed – True Israel?

How has God kept his promises to Israel? To whom has God kept these promises?

Paul always and everywhere has the same answer, as do all NT authors ...

2:2-29 – “A person is **not a Jew** who is one **only outwardly**, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, **a person is a Jew** who is one **inwardly**; and circumcision is **circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not** by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.”

Paul makes an explicit, declarative statement, one that he repeats in one form or another throughout Romans and all of his other writings: Now that Messiah has come,

you may be a Jew ethnically and religiously, **but** if you do **not** believe the Gospel and trust the person and work of Messiah Jesus alone to save you,

- You are NOT “in Messiah” who alone is True Israel, true Seed of Abraham,
- you have NOT the righteousness of God,
- you have NOT the Spirit (and therefore have NOT a circumcised heart),
- you ARE NOT a true child of Abraham,
- you ARE NOT a part of TRUE ISRAEL, the People of God.

Abraham was a **Gentile** when he received – as a gift – right-standing with God, because he believed, he placed his faith, in God and his promise.

He was still uncircumcised physically, but his heart was circumcised.

LATER he was physically circumcised as an outward sign of his inward covenant.

THEREFORE, it is those people – Jew and Gentile ALIKE – who exercise FAITH in GOD’s way of righteousness, Jesus Christ, who are now justified before God.

4:11-12 – “And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”

Abraham is ONLY the father of those who place their faith in Messiah Jesus, both Jew and Gentile. *Everyone comes the same way, ...*

- whether Jew or Gentile, ethnically / religiously Jewish, or pagan Gentile,
- hearing the same Gospel in the same way, without special circumstances,
- and there is NO indication that God will ever save anyone any other way.

GOD’S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM WAS LARGER THAN One Nation or One Land.

That physical nation and physical land were “types” or “forerunners” of something bigger, more inclusive, more encompassing.

This is why the “land promises” to ethnic Israel are *never renewed* in the NT ...

Here, the promise of the Land to Abraham in Genesis 17 is interpreted by Paul to have really been pointing toward the entire world. *That is, the “Land” was only a “type” and as such has been fulfilled by the antitype, “the world.”*

4:13 – “It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be **heir of the world**, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.”

This was God’s plan from the beginning, when he created humanity in his image, and commanded them to fill the Earth, i.e., bear his image into all the world.

Jesus Christ – being the eternal Son incarnate (John 1), and the express image of the Father (Hebrews 1) – perfectly bore the image of God into the world, and now crucified risen, ascended, and enthroned still bears that image, as the True Human as well.

By redeeming people from every nation, placing them “IN CHRIST”, and marking them by the indwelling Spirit, and sending them forth into the world, God has been faithful to his promises to Abraham, AND to his plan that his image and glory fill the Earth.

4:16-17 – “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.¹⁷ As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.”^[c] He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.”

“the promise” – righteousness of God (right-standing w/ God) AND the indwelling Spirit

“by faith” – the gift of God to believe the Gospel & trust Christ’s work alone to save us.

AGAIN: The “promise” that comes by “faith” is the promise God made to give right-standing (justification / forgiveness of sins / being declared not guilty before God) AND the Holy Spirit (see the prophet Jeremiah) to those who will trust God in Christ alone to give this salvation (by grace through faith, not by the works of the Law).

This “promise” is NOT anything else! Paul is using the word “promise” in a very specific way in this passage, and it cannot be used to mean anything else. If we try to force any other meaning into this word, we are saying that God said something he never said. This is what Satan does, NOT what Christians do!

(NOTE: A PASSAGE OFTEN MISINTERPRETED TO SUPPORT FALSE DOCTRINE ...

Romans 4:16-17 has been misused by some as one of the “proof texts” for the false doctrine of “positive confession”: The false teaching that Christians must always “speak forth” or “confess” or “claim” the good things they want to happen ... healing, victory, prosperity, etc.

The “positive confession” heresy says that if we say “negative” things then bad things will be attracted to us or “called into being.”

People who are trapped in this false belief often live in fear of “saying a bad confession”. For example, they may hear an unfavorable diagnosis from a doctor and react by saying “I don’t receive that, I don’t claim that, I’m claiming my healing, I declare that I am healed.”

This false teaching also says that we can “speak life” or “speak death”, that we can “declare” something to be real even before it is actually physically manifested.

All of this is part of the “Positive Confession / Hyper-faith / Name-It-and-Claim-It / Prosperity Gospel heresy.

We have NO record of this ever being TAUGHT or ever being PRACTICED in the Word of God.

This false teaching originated in the mind-science metaphysical cults of the late 1800’s that also gave rise to the Christian Science false teaching and other such cults.

It was birthed in the occultic, metaphysical, “New Age” beliefs of these groups.

This doctrine has NEVER been believed or taught in the entire history of Judaism or Christianity until it infiltrated the charismatic / Pentecostal movement in the 1940’s and afterwards.

There are NO Christian scholars – including Pentecostal / charismatic scholars – who believe this false teaching.

Some false teachers use Romans 4:16-18 to say that WE – Christians – can “call things that are not as though they were” ... that we have the power to call “blessings” that do not yet exist, such as healing, prosperity, etc., into reality by speaking / claiming / declaring them.

This is an OCCULT teaching, NOT a Christian teaching.

This passage says that GOD is the ONE who has the authority and the power to do such things.

AND, this entire passage is dealing with ...

- God’s creation of all things,
- God Calling Abraham out of death and idolatry into LIFE and Yahweh worship,
- Bringing life to Abraham and Sarah when they were old and “dead” as far as having a child, and supernaturally enabling them to have ISAAC, the Child of PROMISE,
- The Jewish Believers hearing this would also have remembered the numerous times that God miraculously spared Abraham’s life, AND God sparing Isaac’s life by providing the ram caught in the thicket,
- Finally, the passage now applies to God’s provision of LIFE to Jesus, True Israel, raising him from the dead, and
- LIFE to Jews and Gentiles who were dead in their sins before Christ saved them and gave them the Holy Spirit.

THESE THINGS are what Paul is speaking of, and nothing else. END OF NOTE

“all Abraham’s offspring” – **all who are re-born by Spirit, by grace, through FAITH ...**

“those who are ‘of the Law’ but ALSO have the faith of Abraham” – Jews who are NOT trusting the Law to save them but are instead trusting CHRIST ALONE to save them.

“He is the father of us all. ... a father of many nations.” – all who believe the Gospel and trust Christ alone to save and give them right-standing w/ God and the gift of the Spirit.

4:22-25 – “Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²² This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³ The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴ **but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness**—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Abraham believed God would do what God had promised.

“it was credited to him as righteousness” – **God imputed, credited, wrote on Abraham’s life ledger: “Righteous: In Right-standing with me.”**

THAT IS, Abraham is no longer an alien, a rebel, owing me a debt of sin he can never pay. That debt of UNRIGHTEOUSNESS is cancelled.

Without Abraham doing anything but repenting (he abandoned his idolatrous lifestyle and worshipped Yahweh alone) and BELIEVING me and my promise, I will cancel his debt to me and CREDIT him, MARK HIM, as RIGHTEOUS.

NOW, Paul says, for the sake of his Son, because of what the Son has done in paying the sin-debt both Jew and Gentile owe to God, GOD REDEEMS and ADOPTS US ...

- if like Abraham we will repent of sin and believe CHRIST ALONE to save us,

- then God will cancel our debt of sin, imputing that debt to Christ on the Cross,
- CREDIT Christ's sacrifice on our behalf to us as if we had been punished already for our sin,
- and CREDIT the righteousness of the Son to our account,
- we will receive the indwelling Holy Spirit, re-born / adopted into God's People, placed "into Christ" to be seen by God as acceptable to him,
- And this is the ONLY way that either Jew or Gentile can become part of God's renewed, restored, resurrected People, True Israel, the True People of God.

THESE INTEGRATED TRUTHS FORM ONE UNITED TRUTH IN PAUL'S TEACHING ...

- Salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone,
- This saving faith as only way to receive the promise given Abraham – right-standing w/ God and the indwelling Spirit,
- Believers are thus placed "in Christ" – who alone in himself is True Israel,
- This is the only way to be a true child of Abraham and part of God's true People,
- And all who reject Messiah Jesus – Jew and Gentile – are NOT True Israel, NOT children of Abraham, NOT part of the New Covenant God cut with us in the body and blood of his Son.

A BIBLE READING SKILL: Every passage must be understood in context: The context of that paragraph, the flow of the author's argument, the book as a whole, the Bible as a whole.

What did the same author say on this subject elsewhere? This is further excellent insight on what this author thought about this subject ... did he repeat this perspective to other churches?

What did other authors say on this subject elsewhere? This tells you what other apostles / churches thought about this subject ... was this perspective taught by all of the Apostles?

HOW do other authors speak to the subject – explicit teaching, applying the OT to the NT situation, does this occur in various settings, various genres?

The more this kind of evidence accumulates, the more you can be certain that a particular perspective is rock solid and must be correct.

EXPLICIT, DECLARATIVE TEACHING IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT.

The foundational principle of "the clear scriptures must always interpret the unclear" is essential here.

Explicit, declarative teaching tells you how to read the unclear or ambiguous passages.

The subject being addressed by Paul: How do you become a child of God / get into the People of God / who are the People of God?

Later in his argument (9:6f), Paul makes a CLEAR, EXPLICIT REDEFINITION OF TERMS: Paul affirms the universally held belief in Judaism of that day that NOT all ethnic or religious Jews were a part of True Israel. Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots, and others, all believed that their group was True Israel, the remnant that was truly faithful to Torah and Yahweh, and all the other Jewish groups were apostate.

Romans 9:6-8 "6 It is not as though God's word had failed. **For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.** 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 In other words, it is

not the natural children who are God's children, **but** it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring."

Paul also redefines "Israel" in Galatians 6:15-16. See below.

A REMNANT of Israel will believe in Messiah, just like a REMNANT of the nations will believe.

Romans 9:27-28 "27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, **only the remnant will be saved.** 28 For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality."

ALL WHO ARE IN THE REMNANT WILL BE SAVED IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY – BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH, WITH SAVED JEWS HAVING NO ADVANTAGE OVER SAVED GENTILES.

Romans 10:12-13 "12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (In this context, the name of the Lord means "Jesus.")

THE SAME AUTHOR, Paul, teaches the same thing everywhere he addresses this subject ...

Philippians 3:3-4 "3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence."

Galatians 3:5-9 "5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

6 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 7 **Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.** 8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." 9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." (Blessed with right-standing w/ God and the Holy Spirit.)

IN HIS GALATIANS ARGUMENTATION, Paul makes the point that promises to Abraham and his Seed were ultimately NOT to all Jews indiscriminately, but to True Israel (True and Faithful Son), who proved to be ONE Son of Abraham, Jesus Christ. It would be through HIM that righteousness and the Spirit would come.

Galatians 3:16, 19 ... "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," **meaning one person, who is Christ.** ... Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the **Seed to whom the promise referred had come. ..."**

Those who are placed by the Spirit INTO CHRIST who alone is True Israel, become by virtue of their union with Christ (being clothed or covered by him) a part of God's True People, a part of Abraham's seed, heirs of the promises of God.

Galatians 3:26-29 "26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 **There is neither Jew nor**

Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**"

SO, throughout all of his writings, whenever Paul addresses this question, he *repeatedly* says exactly the same thing. Emphatically, explicitly, without ambiguity. ...

- GOD has reconstituted – renewed, resurrected, restored, recreated – Israel IN and THROUGH MESSIAH, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- Jew and Gentile MUST enter God's Kingdom, become part of God's People, in exactly the same way ... by grace through faith ... repent, believe the Gospel / trust Christ alone to save, be born again by the Spirit, be placed INTO CHRIST
- NO ONE who refuses this way of salvation – Jew or Gentile – is a part of God's true people.

Paul also makes clear that this NEW way, this NEW covenant, has made the old covenant obsolete. He redefines Israel, as do the other NT writers.

Galatians 6:15-16 "15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. 16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God."

Throughout Galatians Paul has been making his case that it is by grace through faith that we are saved, just as he did in Romans, establishing that True Israel is recreated IN CHRIST, of Jews and Gentiles alike. **THEREFORE, "the Israel of God" MUST refer to the redeemed people of God IN CHRIST by grace through faith, the New Creation, Jew and Gentile alike, Abraham's seed by faith in Jesus Christ.**

Ephesians 2:11-18 – "Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.¹³ **But now in Christ Jesus** you who once were far away have been **brought near by the blood of Christ**. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has **made the two groups one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by **setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations**. **His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,** ¹⁶ **and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.** ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ **For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.**"

Other NT authors do the same. Many could be cited, from the gospels through Revelation. Here are two ...

Peter uses an array of adjectives used in the OT to describe Israel as God's people, BUT NOW they apply to those people, Jew and Gentile, who have believed in God's Messiah, Jesus ...

1 Peter 2:9-10 – "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.¹⁰ **Once you were not a people**, but **now you are the people of God**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

*The author of Hebrews in his letter encouraging Jewish Christians to remain faithful to Christ and to God's larger Church warned them that the old covenant was obsolete and disappearing. Throughout the letter he makes the point that God has made "a new and better covenant" that fulfills the older covenant. **Christ has replaced the entire OT temple, priesthood, and sacrificial system**.*

Hebrews 8:7-9, 13 – " For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. ⁸ But God found fault with the people and said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant** with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ⁹ **It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors ...** ¹³ **By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.**"

MANY OTHER PASSAGES TEACHING THESE TRUTHS COULD BE CITED, from the Gospels through Revelation. These solidly establish Paul's perspective, something foundational to understanding Romans.

God has been faithful to his covenant, but not in the way that most of Judaism expected. Where Israel was unfaithful and failed, Messiah Jesus was FAITHFUL and SUCCEEDED.

II. PART TWO: GOD'S PEOPLE IN CHRIST – THE TRUE HUMANITY – Romans 5:1 – 8:39

- A. 5:1-11 – From Faith to Hope
 - a. 5:1-5 – Peace, Patience, and Hope
 - b. 5:6-11 – The Death of Messiah, the Love of God, and Reconciliation
- B. 5:12-21 – From Adam to the Messiah, From Death to Life
- C. 6:1-23 – Baptism and Freedom
 - a. 6:1-11 – Dying and Rising with the Messiah
 - b. 6:12-14 – The End of Sin's Reign
 - c. 6:15-23 – From Slavery and Freedom
- D. 7:1-8:11 – The Life the Law Could Never Give
 - a. 7:1-6 – Released From the Law, Renewed By the Spirit
 - b. 7:7-12 – The Arrival of the Law: Sin Seizes Its Chance
 - c. 7:13-20 – Living Under the Law: Sin Works Death
 - d. 7:21-25 – Reflecting on the Law: God's Law and Sin's Law
 - e. 8:1-11 – God Gives Life Through the Son and the Spirit
- E. 8:12-30 – The Inheritance Guaranteed
 - a. 8:12-17 – Led by the Spirit
 - b. 8:18-30 – The Renewal of All Things
- F. 8:31-39 – Nothing Will Separate Us From God's Love

In the next section, Chapters 5 – 8, Paul addresses the Adam/Sin problem which the old covenant spotlighted in Israel.

Israel's story is recapitulated as the overarching structure for chapters 5 – 8:

From Creation, to slavery, to exodus, to covenant, to failure, to new covenant, to new creation.

(Chapter 5:1–5 forecasts the rest of Chapters 5 – 8.)

Chapter 5:6-21 – Creation, fall, death

(**NOTE: ADAM, SIN, and DEATH** – *an often misunderstood passage ...*

Romans 5:12-14 – “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.”

“sin entered the world” – “world” – cosmos; world of humans = humanity.

“and death through sin” – “death” – Thanatos; this would not refer to physical death of plants, animals, etc. Nor would it refer primarily to the physical death of Adam.

1. In the creation story (Gen 2) Adam was warned that he would “die” on the day that he sinned. He did not die physically that day. It was spiritual death / condemnation that began that day.
2. Romans 5:18 – the result of sin was condemnation – spiritual death – and not physical death. Physical human death will someday result.
3. The gift of God in Christ is spiritual life, not permanent physical life.
4. The contrast is between being spiritually alive or spiritually dead.
5. **THEREFORE, it is BEST to not connect this passage with physical decay and death entering the world. This passage is NOT teaching that there was no decay or death in the world before Adam’s sin.**

“and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned” – “because all sinned” – while it is not necessarily true that we are “born with a sinful nature”, - a belief that has more profound theological implications than most people understand, *it is nevertheless indeed clear that the disobedience / sinful rebellion of our primal parents gave sin an entrance and foothold in the human race.*

Paul has already emphasized in Chapters 1-4 that ALL SIN, both Jew and Gentile.

Therefore, all are spiritually dead until God gives them LIFE IN THE SON.

CONCLUSION: There are several different ways to understand the person of Adam that are considered orthodox Christian belief. Here, and elsewhere in Scripture and Christian theology he is viewed as a “federal” head of humanity, a “representative” human, a literary archetype, the name used for a “group” of humans who failed, etc., etc. Since the Bible says so little about him, it is wise to not to be dogmatic about your perspective. ... END OF NOTE.)

Chapter 6:1-23 – Slaves (Israel in Egypt) come through the Red Sea to freedom

Slaves (to sin, Jew and Gentile) come through the waters of baptism to freedom

Chapter 7:1-25 – The Law is given at Sinai. Old Covenant. Israel under Torah.

When Torah arrived, Israel recapitulated Adam’s fall. Sin sprang to life.

Chapter 8:1-39 – Covenant renewal – the New Covenant is enacted through Christ & the Spirit.

New creation (the body of the Risen Christ, then our spiritual rebirth, ultimately our resurrection and the New Heavens and New Earth) FLOWS from covenant renewal effected by Messiah Jesus and the Spirit.

8:17f – we are on pilgrimage toward consummation of the New Creation under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We must not return to slavery and fear (Egypt)

Our new creation began when we were reborn of the Spirit. We are journeying toward the consummation – the New Heavens New Earth.

As heirs of the promise and joint-heirs with Christ, that is our inheritance: a New Earth.
8:35-39 – the source of all of this is the covenant love of God.

III. PART THREE: GOD’S PROMISES and GOD’S FAITHFULNESS – 9:1-11:36

- A. 9:1-5 – Israel, the Bearer of God’s Promise, Fails to Believe, and Paul Grieves
- B. 9:6-29 – Israel’s Story from Abraham to Exile Displays God’s Justice in Judgment and Mercy
- C. 9:30-10:31 – God’s Covenant Faithfulness is Revealed in the Messiah
 - a. 9:30-33 – Faith, Works, and the Stumbling Stone
 - b. 10:1-21 – God’s Righteousness and the Mission to the World
- D. 11:1-36 – God Will Fulfill His Unbreakable Promise and Save “All Israel”
 - a. 11:1-10 – God Has Not Rejected Israel
 - b. 11:11-32 – “All Israel” Will Be Saved
 - c. 11:33-36 – Praise to the All-Wise God

Paul continues his argument and explanation regarding: How you become a child of God / get into the People of God, and what constitutes the People of God.

Chapters 9-11 are NOT about individual election. They are about the election / choice of Israel as God’s covenant people: Has God been faithful to his covenant?

Paul is already very far into his case: ...

- Israel has been unfaithful,
- the Law was of no advantage in gaining righteousness from God,
- True Israel was always a REMNANT within national Israel,
- That remnant ultimately was One True Jew: Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
- God has been faithful to True Israel by raising him from the dead and exalting him to David’s throne.
- God has renewed, resurrected, restored Israel IN CHRIST by marking all, Jew-and-Gentile who repent and believe with the indwelling Spirit (circumcising their hearts, writing the Law there).

Paul’s understanding continues to flow within the Remnant Theology of the OT: The faithful remnant of Israel continues from the OT into and through Jesus the Messiah

CHAPTER 9 ...

Chapter 9:6-16 – Paul affirms that True Israel, the remnant, was always a smaller subset of ethnic/national Israel. God’s plan was ALWAYS about his Promise (Election, Faith, God’s Righteousness (justification), the gift of the Spirit), and NEVER about the whole ethnic nation, most of whom never kept covenant (they were unfaithful). It is now those who repent and believe in Jesus the Son who are God’s true people.

Romans 9:6-8 – “It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

Deut 18:15-19 – A prophet like Moses was promised.

Deut 28-30 – Israel was warned that all who were unfaithful to Yahweh and the covenant would be cut off, uprooted, and cast out of the Land, just as other nations who were there before them.

Acts 3:22 – Peter warned the Jews that Jesus was the promised prophet like Moses, and that **all who did not listen to him would be cut off from God's People.**

Romans 9:27 (quoting Isaiah) – “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, **only the remnant will be saved.**”

CHAPTER 10 ...

Although Israel failed and was exiled (Deut 27-29), Jesus succeeded and received all of the covenant promises.

Deut 30 – God's promise of return to the land of life as part of **covenant renewal.**

Messiah and the New Covenant fulfill Deuteronomy 30.

Paul alludes to Deuteronomy 30:11-16 and says that is fulfilled in Romans 10:5-17.

Romans 10:11-13 – “As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹²For *there is no difference between Jew and Gentile*—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, “**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**”

Paul again equates calling on Yahweh in the OT to calling on Jesus as Lord in the NT.

“...there is no difference between Jew and Gentile” – every individual, every people-group, Jew and Gentile, will not receive salvation in only one way ... one and the same way ... forevermore. ALL are saved this way, with no special circumstances for Israel ... as in no last minute mass salvation at the Second Coming.

NOW, covenant renewal – God keeping his promises – occurs whenever anyone repents and believes in Messiah Jesus. That person becomes a participant in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to whom God has kept his promise of covenant renewal.

GOD HAS REMAINED FAITHFUL TO ISRAEL! ... THROUGH MESSIAH JESUS for all who will believe!

CHAPTER 11 ...

WHO IS THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL?

As it has always been with the people of Israel, there is a remnant WITHIN national / ethnic Israel that is TRUE ISRAEL.

True Israel would repent when they broke covenant, heed the prophets' warnings, return to God with their whole heart, and try to keep covenant with Yahweh.

The rest of national/ethnic Israel would refuse to repent, cling to sin and idolatry, they would harden their hearts, and God would then harden their hearts.

11:1-4 – God has not rejected all of Israel, nor has he rejected specific Jews, in an arbitrary manner. Some in Israel, like Paul and most of those who believed on Jesus in the early years, were indeed Jews.

Romans 11:5-8 – “ So too, at the present time **there is a remnant chosen by grace**. ⁶And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. ⁷What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but **the others were hardened**, ⁸as it is written: “**God gave them** a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, **to this very day.**”

In Scripture, God hardened the hearts of those who had already hardened their OWN hearts by refusing to repent. Once that happened the end result was ALWAYS judgment, never salvation.

1 Thess 2:10, 14-16 – “¹⁰You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among **you who believed**. ... ¹⁴For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of **God’s churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own people the same things those churches suffered from the Jews** ¹⁵who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. **They displease God** and are hostile to everyone ¹⁶in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. **In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.**”

PLEASE NOTE ...

Many Jews in Judea DID believe on the Lord Jesus! They became part of TRUE ISRAEL.

BUT, many Jews hardened their hearts, until they reached “the limit” ... the point at which God simply accepted their decision as final and began hardening their hearts ...

“**God’s wrath**” ... God’s **WRATH** or **JUDGMENT HAS ALREADY BEGUN: JUDICIAL HARDENING.**

At this point, people are hardened all the way to FINAL JUDGMENT – there will be no repentance and no salvation for them.

SEE ... Isaiah 6:8-10, Mark 4:12, Luke 8:10 – cases of people who had permanently hardened their own hearts, **God saw they would never repent**, therefore **GOD’S WRATH / JUDGMENT** began to be executed on them ... **HE BEGAN TO HARDEN THEIR HEARTS ... JUDICIAL HARDENING ... NO REPENTANCE OR SALVATION WILL EVER BE POSSIBLE NOW!**

Romans 11:5-10 – Paul explicitly states that some people, including some in Israel, are a part of God’s faithful remnant, and have THEREFORE believed the Gospel. AT THE SAME TIME many people – including in this case most of Israel – have hardened their hearts against God beyond the point of returning.

Romans 11:12 – “ But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

“**fullness**” – **pleroma** – **full number**. The full number of those Jews who will repent, believe the Gospel, and be placed into / grafted into Jesus Christ, saved by grace through faith.

(See Jesus’ metaphor in John 15 – “I am the True Vine ... I am the vine, you are the branches.”)

(Isaiah said Israel had become a bad vine, producing rotten fruit. Israel was untrue, failed.)

Romans 11:24-26 – “ I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until **the full number** of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶and **in this way all Israel** will be saved.”

“the full number” – **pleroma** – **full number**, **fullness**. Same word as in 11:12.

“the fullness of Jews” – “the full number of Jews” – the remnant IN CHRIST, True Israel, saved by grace through faith.
 “the fullness of Gentiles” – “the full number of Gentiles” – the remnant IN CHRIST, True Israel, saved by grace through faith.”

When the full number of Jews and the full number of Gentiles has come in, and no additional Jews or Gentiles are going to believe the Gospel, THEN “ALL ISRAEL” will have been saved.

“ALL ISRAEL” – THE FULL NUMBER OF JEWS AND GENTILES who will hear and believe.

This DOES NOT mean ALL GENTILES in the world or ALL JEWS in the world. It means neither!

This DOES MEAN all Jews and Gentiles who will believe, all that God knows will believe.

NOTE: Paul has been arguing THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE LETTER that Jews and Gentiles must come by grace through faith in exactly the same way: hear the Gospel, repent and believe the Gospel, be placed INTO CHRIST who alone is True Israel.

Paul has said that there are NO special exemptions: ALL MUST HEAR, REPENT, BELIEVE in the same manner.

PAUL WOULD NEVER SABOTAGE HIS ENTIRE ARGUMENT and CONFUSE THE ROMAN BELIEVERS ON THIS FOUNDATIONAL POINT BY INTRODUCING THE EXACT OPPOSITE PROPOSITION AT THE END OF THE DAY.

IF “all Israel” meant every single ethnic Jew alive at Christ’s coming would be saved, **THEN** Paul has at the very end of his argument negated everything he has been saying throughout the letter.

[Paul never does that in his letters.](#)

“ALL ISRAEL” means what it means every other time that Paul uses such a term ... those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6:15-16 “15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is **a new creation.** 16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, **even to the Israel of God.**”

Romans 9:6 – “It is not as though God’s word had failed. **For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.**”

(etc., etc., ... see Paul’s argument above)

Romans 11:25 – “Israel has experienced a hardening in part **until the full number** of the Gentiles has come in, ...”

“achri” – until the end; ***all the way TO THE END with no change afterwards.***

In other words, most of Israel will be hardened until the last Jew-and-Gentile has been saved. There is no indication of a special mass conversion at the end.

Matthew 24:38 – “For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, **up to the day** Noah entered the ark;”

Acts 22:4 – “I persecuted the followers of this Way **to** their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,”

1 Corinthians 11:26 – “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death **until** he comes.”

1 Corinthians 15:25 – “For he must reign **until** he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

“UNTIL” – achri – all the way until, up to the very end, until everything is over and done.

**ISRAEL'S HARDENING CONTINUES UNTIL THE DAY OF SALVATION HAS ENDED!
 ONLY FINAL JUDGMENT NOW AWAITS.
 THERE IS NO LAST-SECOND FORCED SALVATION OF EVERY JEW IN THE WORLD.
 EVEN ISRAEL IN JESUS' DAY NEVER BELIEVED ALL JEWS EVERYWHERE WOULD BE REDEEMED.**

Romans 11:26 – “ ... and in this way all Israel will be saved.” - kai outos – and this is how, in this way, through this process.

“outos” – is used 205 times in the New Testament. NEVER with temporal significance.

In other words, “outos” is never used with any indication that a period of time is involved.

“outos” never implies an eventual change of any kind. There is NO time relationship.

NO reversal is ever implied.

ONLY A SMALL NUMBER, A REMNANT, OF ETHNIC / NATIONAL ISRAEL WILL EVER BE SAVED (just as only a small number, a remnant, of the Gentile Nations will ever be saved.) ...

2 Corinthians 3:13-16 – “ ¹³We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶***But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.***”

EVERYWHERE, PAUL HAS THIS SAME UNDERSTANDING ...

The old covenant is passing away, but Israel has hardened her heart, and God is now hardening the heart of all who will never change their minds.

HOWEVER, there is a REMNANT of individuals in Israel who ARE hearing the Gospel, repenting, and believing. This would continue until the full number of Jews AND Gentiles are saved.

CONCLUSION of CHAPTERS 9-11 ...

In his long diatribe argument, Paul as repeatedly, consistently been hammering home the same themes about salvation.

When doing this, Paul NEVER suddenly reverses his argument near the end. It would completely confuse those hearing or reading the letter!

THEREFORE, for this and for all of the reasons mentioned above, Paul is NOT here teaching that the entirety of ethnic / national Israel will be suddenly and miraculously saved at the Second Coming.

Paul has spent 11 chapters making exactly the opposite point!!

Paul is making exactly the same point in Chapter 11 that he has made in Chapters 1-10: There will be a remnant of Jews and Gentiles from Paul's day all the way up until the Second Coming and the Day of Judgment who will be saved in the only way God has provided: by hearing the Gospel, repenting, believing, being born again of the Spirit, and placed IN CHRIST, the only True Israel. No one will ever be saved any other way.

IV. PART FOUR: GOD'S CALL TO WORSHIP, HOLINESS, and UNITY – 12:1-16-27

- A. 12:1-2 – Worship in Body and Mind
- B. 12:3-13 – Unity, Love, and Community Living
- C. 12:14-13:7 – The Church Faces the Outside World

- a. 12:14-21 – Christian Living Amid Hostile Outsiders
- b. 13:1-7 – God’s Call to Obedience to the Authorities
- D. 13:8-10 – Love Fulfilling the Law
- E. 13:11-14 – Living In the Risen Son
- F. 14:1-15:13 – God’s Call to Unity and Worship Across Barriers of Custom and Ethnicity
 - a. 14:1-12 – Judging and Being Judged
 - b. 14:13-23 – Conscience and the Kingdom of God
 - c. 15:1-13 – Mutual Welcome, Based on the Messiah
- G. 15:14-33 – Paul’s Apostolic Travel Plans
- H. 16:1-16 – Commendation and Greetings
- I. 16:7-20 – Watch out for Divisions
- J. 16:21-24 – Greetings from Paul’s Colleagues
- K. 16:25-27 – Concluding Doxology

Paul’s entire diatribe laid the foundation for Chapters 12-16.

Chapters 1-11 explain to the Roman believers, Jew and Gentile, the basis for their integration as one loving covenant keeping community.

Chapters 1-11 are the REASONS WHY THEY MUST live together in love, unity, harmony, and mutual respect. The Gospel and the honor of God depend on it!

The all-important GOAL driving Paul’s argument grows directly from the problem of disunity and strife between the Jewish and Gentile believers: The critical and essential need for **UNITY** in the Body of Christ. This all-important GOAL OF UNITY that is driving Paul’s argument from beginning to end (1:16-15:13) **is seen at the conclusion of the letter**: “... that God might give Jewish and Gentile believers the “... **same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,**” so that together “...with **one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** (15:5-6). *This is THE POINT or GOAL that Paul was arguing toward all along: the Genuine Unity of the Roman believers, Jew-and-Gentile, one people of God in Christ!*

God’s will – and Paul’s desire – is that through the mind of Christ and the Holy Spirit’s empowering they will all have a sacrificial laying-down-their-lives-for-each-other covenant keeping love. This is what the Gospel and the Spirit will always be producing in yielded, obedient hearts: Close-knit Communities of Covenant-Keeping Love. *Indeed, this is what every single local church is supposed to be: A Close-knit Community of Covenant-Keeping Love.*

The FOCUS of Paul’s argument repeatedly is on what makes this UNITY possible: “**God’s righteousness given to Jew and Gentile alike on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and put into effect by the gift of the Spirit to the believer.**”

Paul commands the believers to honor one another, seek what is best for others, love one another, protect and prefer the weak, obey governmental authorities, avoid people who cause division, promote harmony, unity, and love.

Paul closes by greeting many people in the Roman church by name, some of whom are women who were clearly workers and leaders in the church.

Phoebe, who brought Paul’s letter to Rome, is commended.

Paul closes with one last reminder that this Gospel is for all people from all nations ...

Romans 16:25-27 – “²⁵ Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, ²⁶but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, **so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith** — ²⁷to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.”