

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY IN ROME

Greeting

1 From Paul, a servant^a of Jesus Christ. I was called to be an apostle^b and set apart to preach the good news^c of God—the good news that he promised ahead of time through his prophets in the holy scriptures. The good news is about his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. He was a descendent of David in terms of his physical origin,^d but he was powerfully set apart as the Son of God by the Holy Spirit,^e by his resurrection from among the dead.^f

Through him we've been given grace and the mission^g to bring about obedience to God, based on faith, in all the nations, for the sake of his name.^h Among them, you're also called by Jesus Christ—all of you who are in Rome. You're dearly loved by God and called by God to be holy ones. May you have grace and peaceⁱ from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.^j

Prayer of Thanksgiving

First off, I want to thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you! Your faith has become famous throughout the whole world. God, whom I serve in my spirit by preaching the good news of his Son, will testify that I always take care to

^a Or "slave."

^b Or "emissary." See "Bible Words."

^c "Good news" is often translated "gospel." Gospel is an old English word meaning good news. In the NT, "the good news" connotes life-changing good news, such as the announcement that a war or exile has come to an end (see, e.g., Isa. 52:7ff.).

^d Lit. "from the seed of David, according to the flesh."

^e Lit. "the Spirit of Holiness." The two expressions are synonymous. Paul is intentionally talking in a Jewish way here.

^f Or "marked out as the Son of God by the power of his resurrection from among the dead." "The dead" does not mean "the state of death," but "those who are dead." Jesus has been raised back to life from among the dead.

^g Lit. "apostleship." See "Bible Words."

^h "Name" has a special meaning in the NT. See "Bible Words."

ⁱ Lit. "Grace and peace to you."

^j From the first word of the letter up to this point, everything has been one long sentence. It's a kind of "opening flourish." I've broken it up into smaller sentences.

remember you ¹⁰in all my prayers. I keep asking if it's possible, within God's will, for me to come to you. ¹¹I really want to see you, so that I can share some spiritual gift with you for your strengthening. ¹²In other words, we're going to encourage each other, thanks to the faith that you share with one another and with me.

¹³You should know,^a my brothers and sisters, that I've intended to come to you many times in the past—so that I could have a harvest among you, just as I've had in other countries—but I've been held back until now. ¹⁴I'm under obligation to the Greeks and to the Barbarians,^b to the educated and to the uneducated. ¹⁵That's why I wanted so much to bring the good news to you in Rome.

The Power of the Good News

¹⁶I am not ashamed of the good news, because it's God's powerful way of saving^c everyone who believes: the Jew first, and also the non-Jew.^d ¹⁷Because God's justice is revealed in it—based on faith, and resulting in faith.^e Just like the scripture says:^f

But the person of integrity^g will live on the basis of their faith.^h

Everyone Needs God's Mercy and Forgiveness—Not Just “Those People”

¹⁸After all, God's wrath is revealed from heaven regarding all human godlessness and injustice. People have denied the truth in their injustice, ¹⁹since what's known about God is obvious all aroundⁱ them: God has revealed it to them. ²⁰Ever since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities have been clearly seen—such as his eternity and power and divinity—they've been understood through the things that have been made. As a result, people don't have any excuse. ²¹They knew God, yet they didn't give him glory or thanks. Instead, they became shallow in their thinking, and their unwise hearts went dark. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became foolish. ²³They traded away the glory of God, who is immortal,^j for images of mortal^k human beings, birds, animals, and reptiles.^l

²⁴So God handed them over to the cravings of their hearts. ²⁵Whoever traded away the truth of God for a lie ended up polluting and dishonoring their bodies with

^a Lit. “I don't want you to be ignorant of the fact that,” a standard phrase in letters, when conveying news.

^b See “Bible Words.”

^c Lit. “for is the power of God to salvation for.”

^d Lit. “the Greek.” Jews in Paul's day often used “Greek” to mean non-Jew. This, together with the following sentence, presents Paul's “thesis statement” for the whole presentation of the Good News that he makes in this letter.

^e Lit. “from faith to faith.”

^f Lit. “just as it is written.”

^g Traditionally: “the righteous.” See “Bible Words” for this word.

^h Hab. 2:4. Or “The person who is just on the basis of faith will live.”

ⁱ Or “in and among them,” or “to them all.”

^j Lit. “incorruptible” or “beyond corruption.”

^k Lit. “corruptible.”

^l Or “snakes.”

one another.^a And they worshiped and served the creation rather than the creator, who is blessed for all ages. (Amen!) ²⁶For that reason, God handed them over to lusts that dishonored them. The women traded away their natural function for that which is against nature; ²⁷and similarly, the men also turned away from natural relations with women and burned with lust for one another—men for men. They indulged in shameful conduct, and experienced in themselves the inevitable consequence of going astray.^b ²⁸And since they thought it was worthless to acknowledge God, God handed them over to worthless thinking, so that they did things that weren't right. ²⁹They're full of all kinds of injustice, nastiness, greed, bad temper, hatred,^c murder, divisiveness, dishonesty, and malice. They're back-stabbers, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, full of pride and arrogance and bragging. They're troublemakers, disobedient to parents, ³¹without understanding, without integrity. They're heartless and merciless. ³²Though they know very well that God's verdict is that people who do such things deserve to die, they both do them and give approval to those who do them.

2 As a result, you don't have any excuse, all of you^d who judge. Because in judging the other person, you condemn yourself. After all, you, the person judging, do the same things. ²And we all know that God's judgment is fair^e in relation to those who do these sorts of things. ³But consider this, you who judge people that do something, yet do the same yourself. Are you yourself going to escape the judgment of God? ⁴Are you despising God's great kindness, restraint and patience? Don't you know that God's acts of kindness are supposed to lead you to a change of heart?^f ⁵But suppose your heart is stubborn and unrepentant. Aren't you piling up God's wrath towards you^g for the day when God's wrath and just judgment are revealed?⁸ ⁶He is going to repay each person in line with their behavior. ⁷For those who consistently do good, and so strive for glory and honor and incorruptible life,^h there will be eternal life. ⁸But for those who live selfishly,ⁱ and disobey the truth, while obeying what is unjust, ⁹there will be wrath and fury. Trouble and distress will land on every human soul that does what is bad—the

^a I've simplified the structure. More literally, it goes, "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to filthiness, into the dishonoring of their bodies by one another, whoever traded away the truth of God for the lie."

^b Paul is setting up his Jewish critics by echoing their prejudices towards homosexual promiscuity and other supposed "Gentile" vices. They may be nodding their heads now, but their self-righteous condemnation of others is immediately going to come back and bite them (see 2:1ff.).

^c Or "spite," or "envy."

^d Lit. "every human being."

^e Lit. "according to the truth."

^f Traditionally: "repentance." This word connotes a complete change of attitude that issues in a change of behavior. It is not to be confused with feelings of remorse or shame. See "Bible Words" under "repentance."

^g Lit. "aren't you storing up wrath in a day of wrath and revelation of just judgment of God?"

^h Lit. "incorruptableness."

ⁱ Or "promote themselves." The word connotes working situations for your own ends, intentionally setting others against each other.

Jew first, and also the non-Jew.^a ¹⁰But glory and honor and peace will come to everyone who does good—the Jew first, and also the non-Jew.

God Will Judge Jews and Gentiles on the Same Basis

¹¹Because there's no such thing as special status with God. ¹²Those who sin^b without the Law will perish without reference to the Law, and those who sin knowing the Law^c will be judged based on the Law. ¹³After all, it's not those who hear the Law read to them that are just: it's those who carry out the Law who are going to be declared just. ¹⁴For example, sometimes non-Jews, who don't have the Law, instinctively do the things the Law requires. These people, despite not having the Law, embody the Law in themselves. ¹⁵They demonstrate the result of the Law being engraved on their hearts, bearing witness to their consciences. As I understand the good news, it will be their own arguments and reasonings with one another—whether condemning or approving—that will judge them ¹⁶on the day when God judges the secrets of humanity through Jesus Christ.^d

¹⁷So—do you call yourself a Jew, and rely on the Law, and take pride in God? ¹⁸Do you know his will, and value the things that have worth, because you've been taught from the Law? ¹⁹Have you convinced yourself that you're a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in the dark, ^{20a}a teacher of the ignorant, an instructor of the immature? ²¹While you're teaching others the shape of knowledge and truth in the Law, do you fail to teach yourself? While you're preaching that people shouldn't steal, do you yourself steal? ²²While you're saying not to go to bed with other people's spouses, are you going to bed with someone else's spouse?^e Do you hate idols, yet take treasures from their temples? ²³While you're taking pride in the Law, do you dishonor God by breaking the Law? ²⁴After all, as scripture says,^f

Because of you, God's name is insulted among the nations.^g

²⁵So circumcision^h is worth something, if you live out the Law. But if you're a person who breaks the Law, your circumcision turns into lack of circumcision. ²⁶If that's true, then won't a person's lack of circumcision be counted as circumcision, if they keep the just decrees of the Law? ²⁷If a person is uncircumcised, yet fulfills the Law by nature,ⁱ won't they judge you? Because, despite having the letter of

^a See the nt. on Rom. 1:16.

^b The Greek word here connotes a missing of the target, a going astray from the good.

^c Lit. "within the Law."

^d I suspect Paul knows the sayings of Jesus recorded in Mt. 12:41-42 and Lk. 11:31-32. Jesus pictures the judgment that closes the current age as a trial scene in which various parties stand up and testify, arguing who should, and should not, get the privilege of participating in the age of resurrection (see, similarly, Rev. 11:17-18; 20:4).

^e Traditionally: "While you are saying not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery?"

^f Lit. "Just as it is written."

^g Isa. 52:5; Ezek. 36:20.

^h See "Bible Words."

ⁱ Following Lattimore, who has "the uncircumcised, who by nature fulfill the Law."

the Law, and your circumcision, you're a person who breaks the Law. ²⁸It isn't those who are outwardly Jews who are Jews, nor is it those who are physically circumcised. ²⁹No, it's the person who's a Jew in the hidden place: it's the circumcision of the heart, that's done by the Spirit, not by the letter of the Law. That person's approval is not from human beings, but from God.

The Blessings of Being a Jew—And the Problem That Jews Share with All of Humanity

3 Given all this,^a what's the advantage of being a Jew? Or what's the benefit of circumcision?^b ²It's a great benefit in every way! In the first place, the Jews have been entrusted with God's revelations.^c ³So, what if some were unfaithful to that trust? Can their lack of faith cancel out God's faithfulness? ⁴Never!^d God has to remain true even if every human being is a liar. As scripture says,^e

And so you're justified in saying the things you said, and you'll prevail if you're criticized.^f

⁵But let's say that our injustice does bring out God's justice. Isn't God unjust for expressing wrath? (I'm thinking in human terms.^g) ⁶Never! Otherwise, how can God judge the world? ⁷Well, you may say,^h if God's truth becomes even greater, and God ends up getting glory because of my lie, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸By the way,ⁱ aren't we slandered by just that accusation—certain people claiming that we say, "We're going to do bad things, so that good things will come out of it"? If we actually said that, their criticism would be^j totally justified.

⁹So what then? Are we Jews better? Not all that much!^k After all, we've just accused everyone—Jews and non-Jews alike—of being under the power of sin. ¹⁰It's just like the scripture says,^l

There's not even one person of integrity,^m
 11 Not one who understands,

^a Lit. "So" or "Therefore."

^b See "Bible Words."

^c Lit. "with the oracles of God."

^d Or "May God strike me down if I should ever say that," or, even closer, "May God not strike me down—for even putting that thought into words."

^e Lit. "just as it is written."

^f Or "tried" (in court). This is a quote from Ps. 51:4, which follows David's admission that he has lied and done wrong.

^g Lit. "I'm talking according to humankind."

^h An equal number of ancient mss have "Because," not "Well" (lit. "And"). The ancient versions (i.e. the translations from Greek into other languages such as Aramaic and Latin) are also split evenly. I think Paul has switched back into the voice of his hypothetical questioner, rather than speaking in his own voice here.

ⁱ Lit. "And."

^j Lit. "is." Paul is saying that their criticism of the position is justified—it's just that it's a mischaracterization of his teaching.

^k Lattimore has "Not altogether." Most translations, prejudiced by Reformation thinking, have "No, not at all!"

^l Lit. "just as it is written."

^m Traditionally: "not one righteous." See "Bible Words."

Not one who searches for God.

¹²They've all turned away,^a
All of them have become useless.
There's no one who does right,^b
Not even one single person.

¹³Their throat is an open tomb,
And with their tongues they tell lies.
The venom of an asp hides behind their lips,^c

¹⁴And their mouths are full of cursing and poison.

¹⁵Their feet eagerly run^d to shed blood,

¹⁶And disaster and misery lie on their paths;

¹⁷They haven't recognized the path of peace.

¹⁸In^e their eyes, there's no such thing as respect for God.^f

¹⁹Now, we know that whatever the Law^g says, it says to those who are in its jurisdiction.^h And it says these things so that every mouth may be shut, and the entire world will come under God's jurisdiction. ²⁰That's why "no flesh is going to be found innocent in front of him"ⁱ by doing what the Law requires:^j because it's through the Law that the full recognition of sin comes.

Paul's Thesis: God's Solution is Based on Forgiveness through Faith in Jesus Christ

²¹But now God's justice has been revealed apart from the Law, with the Law and the Prophets testifying to it. ²²This is the justice of God that is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ,^k to the benefit of everyone who believes. There is no distinction: ²³all have sinned^l and fail^m the glory of God. ²⁴Without cost, all are found innocent by his grace,ⁿ through their redemption^o by Christ Jesus.^p ²⁵It was Jesus whom God put forward as a gift that makes amends^q through faith in his

^a Or "retreated," or "degenerated."

^b Another possibility is, "no one who practices kindness."

^c Lit. "is under their lips."

^d Lit. "Their feet are quick."

^e Lit. "in front of."

^f For this chain of quotations, see Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccl. 7:20; Ps. 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Isa. 57:7-8; Prov. 1:16; Ps. 36:1.

^g The law referred to here is the Law of Moses, or, more broadly, the Hebrew scriptures, including those just quoted. Paul's implication is, when scripture says that no one is in the right, it says it in particular about those who are under its jurisdiction, i.e. the Jewish people.

^h Lit. "it says to those within the Law."

ⁱ Ps. 143:2.

^j Traditionally: "works of the Law."

^k Or, quite possibly, "through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ."

^l This word indicates a falling short or a going astray from what is right.

^m Traditionally: "fall short of." But that's not strong enough to capture Paul's meaning.

ⁿ Lit. "being found innocent for free by his grace."

^o See "Bible Words."

^p Or "through the release from bondage that is in Christ Jesus."

^q "A gift that makes amends": or, "a propitiation" (see "Bible Words"). For the classical biblical example of propitiation, see Gen. 32:3-33:4.

blood. This was to show forth God's just judgment through the forgiveness of past sins ²⁶by God's mercy. It was also to demonstrate God's justice in this age, so that he may be seen to be just in finding innocent the person who has faith in Jesus.^a

²⁷So what basis is there for pride? None. Pride is excluded. On what law do we depend? A law based on doing things? No, we depend on a law based on faith.^b

²⁸We believe that humanity is found innocent by faith, completely apart from doing what the Law requires. ²⁹Is God only the God of Jews, and not of the Gentiles? Yes, he's the God of the Gentiles, too. ³⁰Since God is One, he will find the circumcised innocent on the basis of faith, and will find the uncircumcised innocent by faith. ³¹So are we canceling out the Law on the basis of faith? Absolutely not!^c We're confirming the Law.

The Principle of Faith is Older Than the Jewish Law

4 So, what can we say about the experience of Abraham,^d our physical ancestor? ²Surely, if Abraham was found innocent on the basis of things he did, he had something to brag about—but not in front of God. ³After all, what does scripture say?

Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as being in the right.^e

⁴Now, to someone who works, their payment is not “credited” to them by grace, but by obligation. ⁵But to the person who doesn't work, but puts belief in the One who acquits^f the ungodly, their faith is credited to them as being in the right. ⁶Similarly, David also speaks about the blessedness of the person that God credits as being in the right completely apart from doing what the Law requires:

⁷Blessed are the people whose lawless acts have been forgiven,
Whose sins have been covered over.

⁸Blessed is the man whose failure God does not hold against^g him.^h

^a Or “the person who depends on the faithfulness of Jesus.” Paul's writing here has gotten exceedingly dense because he is switching gears. He has finished proving that everyone falls short and needs God's grace, and now he intends to prove that God's chosen way of conveying the grace people need is through faith—not through their perfect compliance with the Law. This sentence is the thesis statement for Paul's following section, in which he gives a preview of his coming argument that it is through the obedience and death of Christ, and through people's faith in Christ's act of forgiveness, that God has accomplished the transaction of grace. Note how this thesis statement of the new section comes before the final wrap-up of the current section. That is a standard technique in the ancient art of structuring an argument.

^b Lit. “Through what law? A law of works? No, through a law of faith.” But I think he's referring to the basis of acquittal by God, not to the exclusion of pride. According to what he has just said, pride is excluded by a law of works, because it finds everyone falling short.

^c See the nt. on Rom. 3:4 above.

^d Lit. “What then shall we say that Abraham discovered?”

^e Traditionally: “it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6; see also Gal. 3:6, Jas 2:23).

^f Traditionally: “justifies.” See “Bible Words” under “justify, justification.”

^g “Hold against” goes back to the same word as has been translated “credit.” It's about keeping accounts, whether positive or negative.

^h Ps. 32:1-2. David says “man” here—not “person”—because he is thinking about himself.

Now, is this blessing for those who are circumcised, or is it also for those who are uncircumcised? Remember,^a we said that “Abraham’s faith was credited to him as being in the right.”¹⁰ So when was it credited? Was it when he was in a state of circumcision, or of uncircumcision? It was not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision! ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of^b the right standing by faith that he had while he was uncircumcised. That way he could be the father of all those who believe while in the state of uncircumcision, so that their belief may be credited to them as being in the right! ¹²Our father Abraham is also father to those who are circumcised, who do not simply have circumcision,^c but who also follow in the footsteps of faith that he took when he was in uncircumcision.

¹³After all, the promise to Abraham, or to his offspring,^d did not come through the Law. No, his promised inheritance of the world came through the right standing of faith! ¹⁴If it’s those who have the Law^e who are the inheritors, then faith has been sapped of all meaning,^f and the promise has been nullified. ¹⁵The Law brings about God’s wrath! But to the person who does not have the Law, there is no breaking of it. ¹⁶That’s why it’s about^g faith. It’s so that it will be by grace, so that the promise will remain in force for everyone who is Abraham’s offspring—not just the person who has the Law, but also the person who shares^h Abraham’s faith. He is the father of all of us! ¹⁷Just like the scripture says,ⁱ

I have appointed you to be a father of many nations.^j

In the face of that promise,^k he believed that God was able to bring the dead back to life, and to call into being things that don’t exist.^l ¹⁸It was he who kept hoping and hoping, and believed that he would become father to many nations. As it had been said to him, “That’s the way your offspring will be.”^m ¹⁹His faith did not weaken as he thought about his own body, which had pretty much already died. (He was a hundred years old or so.) He didn’t doubt as he thought about the

^a Lit. “For,” referring to the quotation recently cited.

^b Lit. “as a seal on.” See “Bible Words,” under “seal.”

^c More literally, “to those who come not only out of circumcision.”

^d Lit. “seed.”

^e More literally, “those who come out of the Law.” I think he’s talking about those who have their identity constituted by their relationship with the Law.

^f Lit. “faith has become emptied out.”

^g Lit. “it is out of.”

^h Lit. “who is out of.”

ⁱ Lit. “just as it is written.”

^j Gen. 17:5.

^k Or “In front of God.” Lit. “In the presence of whom” (referring ahead in the sentence, to God), or “In the presence of which” (referring back, to the promise just quoted). Nearly all translators prefer the former. I think the latter fits the flow of argument better.

^l Lit. “to call the things that are not being as being.”

^m That is, “like the sand on the seashore,” and “like the stars of heaven,” i.e. too many to count (Gen. 15:5).

infertility^a of Sarah’s womb, either. ²⁰He went for the promise of God, and didn’t slip into unbelief.^b Just the opposite: he was empowered by faith, and gave glory to God. ²¹He was totally convinced that God was capable of doing what had been promised. ²²And that’s why “it was credited to him as being in the right.” ²³And it wasn’t just written that it was “credited to him” for his sake alone, but also for our sake! It’s going to be credited to us too.^c ²⁴We too believe in the One who raised Jesus our Lord from among the dead. ²⁵It is he who was delivered over to punishment because of our offenses, and who rose so that we could be acquitted.^d

The Death of Christ Accomplishes our Forgiveness and Reconciliation to God

5 Since we have been found innocent on the basis of faith, we have^e peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²And through him we have access, by faith, to this place of grace in which we now stand. And we can boast^f of hope in the glory of God. ³And that’s not all! We even boast about our persecutions, because we know that persecution leads to endurance. ⁴And endurance leads to passing the test,^g and passing the test leads to hope. ⁵And hope doesn’t let us down, because God’s love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. ⁶After all, didn’t Christ die on our behalf at the moment when we were still weak, still godless?^h ⁷If you think of it,ⁱ a person would hardly die even for a person of integrity^j—though for a truly good person one could possibly even get up the courage to die. ⁸Yet God demonstrates his love for us, because Christ died for us when we were still sinners. ⁹So we are now found innocent by Christ’s blood. And since that is true, it should be all the more obvious that we will be saved from God’s wrath because of him! ¹⁰After all, it was when we were enemies that we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son—so it should be all the more obvious that we’ll be saved by his life. ¹¹And not only that! We’re even proud to talk about God because of our Lord Jesus Christ,^k through whom we’ve now received reconciliation.

^a Lit. “deadness.”

^b Lit. “not wavering in unbelief.”

^c Lit. “because of alone, but also because of us, to whom it is going to be credited.”

^d Traditionally: “because of our justification.” See “Bible Words” under “justify, justification.” It may seem to a modern reader that Paul has gotten distracted from his train of thought in bringing in Jesus and his death and resurrection here, but he hasn’t. He’s using a familiar structure for developing an argument. This is a “thesis statement” for his next section, which signals that he is now going to move on to a new stage of the argument. In the next stage, he will explain “being found innocent through faith” in relation to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

^e Or “let us have.”

^f Or “we boast,” or “let us boast,” or “we/let’s pride ourselves on.”

^g Lit. “provenness,” but we don’t use that word in English.

^h This is a difficult sentence, which the profusion of text variants shows. Literally, it is, roughly, “For Christ, when we were still weak, right at the necessary moment, died on behalf of godless ones.”

ⁱ Lit. “For.”

^j Traditionally: “a righteous person.”

^k Lit. “And not only that, but we boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

¹²So then, it was through one human being that sin came into the world. And through sin came death. In that way death spread through all human beings—because all of them sinned. ¹³After all, sin was in the world before the Law, even though sin isn't counted as such without the Law being there. ¹⁴Still, death ruled from Adam until Moses—even over those who hadn't sinned in exactly the same way as Adam had, by disobeying a command.^a

Adam is a counterpart of the One who was to come. ¹⁵Of course, his offense was totally unlike the gift that was to be given. On the one hand, one person's offense caused a great many people^b to die. Yet on the other hand, there is a far greater grace of God: the free gift by grace, which has overflowed for many people through the one person, Jesus Christ. ¹⁶Once again, the gift given is unlike the result of the one person sinning. The judgment that arose from the one person resulted in condemnation; yet grace, arising out of many offenses, resulted in acquittal. ¹⁷After all, it was by the one person's offense that death ruled—all because of the one person. So what about those who have received God's overflowing grace and gift of acquittal? Won't they rule in life through the one person, Jesus Christ?

¹⁸In conclusion, one person's offense ended up in condemnation for all people; in the same way, one person's good deed ended up in the acquittal that means life for all people. ¹⁹Again, just as the disobedience of the one person led to a great many people^c being found sinners, so also the obedience of the One led to a great many people being found innocent. ²⁰Now, the Law came in so that the offense would go even further. But where sin went further, grace overflowed even more. ²¹So just as sin ruled, leading to death,^d so also grace will rule through acquittal, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Does God's Grace Give Us a License to Sin?

6 So, what shall we say? Shall we stay in sin, so that grace will go even further? ²Never! We've died to sin. How can we still live in it? ³Don't you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? ⁴So we've been buried with him, through baptism, into death. That way, just as Christ rose from among the dead by the glory the Father, so we also will live in newness of life. ⁵After all, haven't we become united with him by sharing in a death like his? If so, then we will surely also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶We know that our old person was hung on a cross with him. That way our sinful body was cancelled out, so that we won't serve as sin's slaves any

^a Lit. "those who hadn't sinned in a way similar to Adam's transgression." Paul is thinking of the specific warning from Gen. 2:17: "In the day that you eat of it you will die."

^b Lit. "the many."

^c Lit. "the many."

^d Lit. "sin ruled in death."

more. ⁷Because when a person dies, they're cleared from sin.^a ⁸And if we died with Christ, then we believe that we're going to live with him too. ⁹We know that Christ has risen from among the dead—and he's never going to die again. Death is no longer his master. ¹⁰When he died, he died once for all to deal with sin. But now that he lives, he lives for God.^b ¹¹In the same way, you should regard yourselves as dead in relation to sin, but as alive in relation to God in Christ Jesus.

¹²So don't let sin rule in your mortal bodies. Don't obey its lusts. ¹³And don't offer the parts of your body to sin so that it can use them as weapons of wrongdoing. Instead, present yourselves to God—just as if you had come alive from among the dead. And offer the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for right living: ¹⁴sin is not going to be your master, because you're not subject to law, but to grace.

¹⁵So, then—are we going to sin because we aren't subject to law, but to grace? Absolutely not! ¹⁶Don't you know that when you offer yourself as slaves to someone, you end up obeying them? You are slaves of whoever you obey. Either it's sin—which ends up in death—or obedience, which ends up in right living. ¹⁷But thank God! Though you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from your heart the pattern of teaching that you were entrusted to. ¹⁸And you were freed from sin in order to serve right living. ¹⁹(I'm talking in human terms here, because of the weakness of your flesh.) In the past you presented the parts of your body as slaves to filthiness and to lawless behavior. That resulted in lawlessness. So now, in the same way, present the parts of your body as slaves of right living—which results in holiness. ²⁰After all, when you were slaves of sin, you were free in relation to right living. ²¹So, what results^c did you experience back then? Did you get anything out of those things—the things that you're ashamed of now? The end result of them is death, right?^d ²²But now you've been freed from slavery to sin, and you're serving God! And you have your results^e of growth into holiness. And the end result is going to be eternal life. ²³Because sin pays death as its wages, but the gift that God gives through Christ Jesus our Lord is eternal life.

7 I suppose you know, my brothers and sisters, that the Law only has jurisdiction over a person as long as they're alive. (I'm talking here to those who know the Law.) ²For example, a married woman is bound by law to her living husband. But if the husband dies, the Law releases her from her husband. ³So while her husband is alive, she'll be accused of breaking her marriage vows^f if she goes to another man. But if her husband dies, she's freed from that law. She won't

^a In other words, they're considered to have paid off the penalty for their sin (see Rom. 6:23).

^b Lit. "As for the fact that he died, he died once for all to sin; as for the fact that he lives, he lives to God."

^c Lit. "fruit" or "harvest."

^d Lit. "For the end result of them is death."

^e Lit. "fruit" or "harvest."

^f Lit. "she will be called a breaker of her marriage vows" (traditionally: "an adulteress").

be breaking her vows^a if she goes to be with another man. Brothers and sisters, here's my point. You too have died in relation to the Law. Through the body of Christ, you were to be joined to another—to him who rose from among the dead. Why? So we will bear fruit for God! After all, when we were living in the flesh, because of the Law, the consequences of our sins worked their way through the members of our bodies. And the ultimate result of that was going to be death.^b But now we've been released from the Law: we've died in relation to the thing that had bound us. So now^c we serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the old way of the letter.

The Law is Good—It's Human Sin That's the Problem

So what shall we say? That the Law is sin? Of course not! Just the opposite. I would never have known what sin was, if it hadn't been for the Law. For example, I wouldn't have known what coveting was, if the Law hadn't said, "Don't covet."^d But the sin of coveting took advantage of the command, and brought out all kinds of coveting in me. After all, apart from any law, sin is dead. So I was alive apart from the Law at one time. But when the command came, sin sprang to life and I died. And for me, the very command that was supposed to end up in life ended up in death. Because the sin took advantage of the command. It tricked me through it, and killed me through it. So the result is that the Law is holy, and the command is holy and just and good.

So did something good turn into death for me? Absolutely not! Just the opposite. It was just that sin had to be revealed as sin. So when sin worked death in me through the good thing, it was so that sin would reveal itself as^e totally sinful by means of the command. After all, we know that the Law is spiritual. But I'm made of flesh. I've been sold into slavery to sin, because I don't understand what I'm bringing about. It isn't what I want to do that I do, but the very thing that I hate. And if it's the very thing that I don't want to do that I end up doing, then I am agreeing that the Law is good. And it's no longer a matter of me making something happen—no, it's the sin that's there^f in me. After all, in terms of my flesh, I know that good isn't there in me. The desire is right there in me, but the ability to bring about the good isn't. I don't end up doing the good that I want to do—instead I do exactly the bad thing that I don't want. And if I'm doing what I don't want, then it's no longer me bringing it about, but the sin that's there^g in

^a Traditionally: "she won't be being an adulteress."

^b This is a complicated sentence. More literally, it is: "For when we were in the flesh, the consequences [or "passions"] of our sins, which are because of the Law, worked their way in our members towards fruit-bearing in death."

^c Lit. "As a result."

^d "Coveting" is seeing something that belongs to someone else, and wishing that you had it, rather than them. See Exod. 20:17. Interestingly, the word for "coveting" is the same as the word for "lust."

^e Lit. "become" or "turn out to be."

^f Lit. "residing."

^g Lit. "residing."

me. ²¹So that's how I experience the Law:^a in my desire to do what's good, only the bad is available to me. ²²I certainly agree^b with the Law of God in my innermost person, ²³but I see another law at work in the parts of my body. That law is at war with the law of my mind. And it captures me by means of the law of sin that's in the parts of my body. ²⁴I am such a miserable person! Who's going to save me from this deathly body? ²⁵But thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!^c The conclusion is that I myself serve the Law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve a law of sin.

Forgiveness in Christ Opens the Door to Life in the Spirit

8 So now there's no guilty verdict at all for those who are in Christ Jesus! ¹Because the Spirit of Life's own law has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ²After all, there was one thing the Law couldn't do—because it was weakened by the flesh. So God sent his own Son. He appeared in flesh just like our sinful flesh, and as a sin offering. So God pronounced a guilty verdict on sin in the flesh. ³That way the Law's full acquittal could be given to us—we who don't live in line with^d the flesh, but in line with the Spirit.

⁴After all, those who live in line with the flesh think about the flesh's concerns, and those in line with the Spirit think about the Spirit's concerns. ⁵And the flesh's way of thinking is death. But the Spirit's way of thinking is life and peace. ⁶That's because the flesh's way of thinking is hostile^e to God. That way of thinking doesn't submit to God's law. It just can't do it. ⁷And those living in line with the flesh can't please God.

⁸However, you're not living in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God is living in you. But if someone doesn't have Christ's Spirit, that person doesn't belong to him. ⁹But if Christ is in you, then your body may be dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life to you because of right living. ¹⁰And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from among the dead is living in you, then the One who raised Christ from among the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life, through his Spirit who lives inside you!

¹²So the conclusion, brothers and sisters, is this. We have no obligation to the flesh: we don't have to live in line with it. ¹³Because if you live in line with the

^a Or "So I find this law to be at play." It is unclear whether Paul is talking about the Law of the Torah or whether he is talking generally of a consistent pattern of experience, like a scientific law. Below he will talk about "the law of sin," so he can obviously use the word "law" in the second way.

^b Lit. "For I agree."

^c This sentence logically belongs with the first sentence of Chapter 8. In the recognized, ancient formal argument style that Paul is using here, it is common to make a statement that hints of your new section before you make your final statement of the current section. That is what Paul is doing. His original readers would have recognized it, but to a modern reader it is confusing. See the nt. on Rom. 3:26 for discussion of a similar transition in his argument.

^d Lit. "who do not walk according to," and so in the next phrase.

^e Lit. "enmity."

flesh, you're going to die. But if you make the bad behaviors of the body die off with the Spirit, you're going to live. ¹⁴All of those who are led by the Spirit of God are God's children! ¹⁵After all, you haven't received a spirit of slavery that leads you into fear all over again: you've received the Spirit of adoption! By the Spirit, we cry out, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶The very same Spirit testifies to our spirits that we are God's children. ¹⁷And if we're children, then we're heirs^a too—heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ! That is, as long as we suffer with him, so that we can be glorified with him.

The Costs—And the Glories—Of This New Life

¹⁸In my opinion, our current sufferings can't even be compared with the glory that's about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹Because the creation is really yearning for^b God's children to be revealed. ²⁰After all, when the creation was subjected to human folly,^c it certainly wasn't because it wanted to be. No, God subjected it^d in hope—²¹that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay, into the freedom of the glory of God's children. ²²We know that the whole creation is groaning together, and going through labor pains together, right up to this moment. ²³And not only that: those of us who have the first harvest^e of the Spirit groan within ourselves too. We're looking forward to our adoption, to the setting free^f of our bodies. ²⁴We're saved in hope—and hope that's seen is not hope. Who hopes for what they see? ²⁵But since we're hoping for what we don't see, we wait for it with determination.

²⁶And the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. We don't know how to pray like we should, but the Spirit personally intercedes for us, with wordless groans. ²⁷And the One who searches our hearts knows the Spirit's mind, because the Spirit intercedes for the holy ones in line with the will of God. ²⁸And we know that everything works together^g for good, for those who love God, who are called in line with his purpose. ²⁹Because:

Those whom he foreknows,
He has foreordained to be molded into the image of his Son.
That way, he will be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters!
³⁰And those whom he foreordains, he calls.

^a See "Bible Words."

^b Lit. "For the earnest expectation of the creation is looking forward to."

^c "Human foolishness"; or "vanity," "emptiness," "foolishness."

^d Lit. "...by its own will, but by the will of the One who subjected it."

^e Lit. "the firstfruits," i.e. the early harvest that was celebrated in the Jewish Festival of Booths.

^f Lit. "redemption." Paul's metaphor is that our bodies are in bondage to mortality, and that they are some day going to be purchased into freedom.

^g Or "that God weaves everything together."

And those whom he calls, he finds innocent.

And those whom he finds innocent, he glorifies.^a

³¹So what shall we say about all of this? If God is for us, who dares to be against us? ³²After all, he is the One who didn't even hold back his own Son. No, he gave him up for us all! And so, with him on our side, how can he not give us everything?^b

³³Who's going to bring an accusation against God's chosen ones?^c God is the One who finds us innocent! ³⁴Who's going to condemn? Christ Jesus is the One who died, and, what's more, he is risen! He's the One who also sits at God's right side—and who also intercedes for us! ³⁵Who's going to cut us off from Christ's love? Will harassment do it, or stress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? ³⁶Just as scripture says,^d

For your sake we're being put to death all day long;
We're thought of as sheep to be slaughtered.^e

³⁷But in all these things we totally win, through the One who loves us! ³⁸Because I'm convinced that

neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor authorities,
nor things that are, nor things to come,
nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth,
nor anything in creation,

will ever be able to cut us off from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.^f

What Does it Mean That So Many Jews Reject Jesus as the Christ?

9 I'm telling the truth in Christ—I'm not lying, and my conscience backs me up in the Holy Spirit: ¹I have a deep grief, and there is constant ache in my heart. ²I could even wish that I could be rejected from Christ—instead of my brothers and sisters, my human family.^g ³I'm talking about the Israelites: it is their gift to be God's children—and to have the glory of God, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the ministry of worship, and the promises. ⁴To them also belong the

^a I think Paul is either composing or quoting Christian poetry here. Most translators put these verbs into the past tense, but he is stating timeless truths, not talking about things that happened in the past. The Greek simple past tense is used for just these kinds of timeless statements.

^b Lit. "How will God not also, with him, give us all things?" I'm following Lattimore in understanding Christ as there with and for us, rather than as part of God's giving.

^c Traditionally: "God's elect" (see "Bible Words").

^d Lit. "just as it is written."

^e Ps. 44:22.

^f Again, I think Paul is either creating or quoting Christian poetry here.

^g Lit. "my kin according to the flesh."

ancestors, and from them comes the Christ, in terms of his human birth:^a he is God over all, and blessed forever! Amen.

«But it isn't as though the word of God has failed. After all, not everyone who's from Israel is really Israel—⁷just as not all the offspring of Abraham are Abraham's children. No,

It is through Isaac that your offspring will be known.^b

«Which means it isn't the physical children^c who are God's children—it's the children of the promise who are considered to be offspring. «Because the word of the promise says this:

At this time of year I'm going to come back, and Sarah is going to have a son.^d

«But not only that. Rebecca conceived her two twins from the one father, our father Isaac. ¹²And it was said to her,

The older one is going to serve the younger one!^e

«Yet that was before they were even born, or did anything good or bad. It happened this way so that God's own choice^f would stand—not based on things they did, but on the One who called.^g ¹³As scripture says,^h

I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau.ⁱ

«So what shall we say? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! ¹⁵After all, he says to Moses,

I will be merciful to whom I want to be merciful,
And I will be compassionate to whom I want to be compassionate.^j

«So it's not a matter of who wants it, or who runs after it. No, it's a matter of who God has mercy on. ¹⁷After all, scripture says to Pharaoh:

I have raised you up for one reason:
To demonstrate my power through you,
And to make my name known to the whole world.^k

^a Lit. "according to the flesh," or "as far as the flesh goes."

^b Lit. "called," or "named," or "chosen" (Gen. 21:12).

^c Lit. "children of the flesh."

^d Gen. 18:10,14.

^e Gen. 25:23.

^f Lit. "God's will according to his choice."

^g I've changed the order of the clauses in v. 12 for clarity and ease of comprehension.

^h Lit. "just as it is written."

ⁱ Mal. 1:2-3.

^j Lit. "I will be merciful to whom I am merciful, and I will be compassionate to whom I am compassionate" (Exod. 33:19).

^k Lit. "earth." Exod. 9:16.

¹⁸So whoever God wants to have mercy on, he has mercy on. But whoever he wants to harden, he hardens.

¹⁹Then you'll say to me, "So how does God still blame people? After all, who stands up against his will?" ²⁰Friend, that argument cuts against you!^a Who are you to answer back to God? Surely something that's shaped can't say to the one who shaped it, "Why did you make me this way?" ²¹And doesn't a potter have the right to make different pieces from one lump of clay—maybe one especially fine piece, and one ordinary piece?

²²But what if God was willing all along to show his anger and make known his power—but still showed great restraint and patience towards the pieces that he was angry at, those destined to be broken?^b ²³What if it was to make known the wealth of his glory in relation to the pieces that were objects of mercy, the ones that he had prepared beforehand for glory? ²⁴In other words, ourselves—those whom he has called not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles!

²⁵As God also says in Hosea,

I'm going to call a people that is not my people, "My people!"
And the one that is not loved, "My loved one!"

²⁶And in the very place where it was said to them, "You're not my people,"
They going to be called children of the Living God!

²⁷Yet Isaiah cries over Israel,

Even if the population of the children of Israel is like the sand on the
seashore,

Only a tail end is going to be saved,

²⁸Because the Lord of the whole earth is going to do something,
And he's going to be thorough and quick about it.

²⁹And as Isaiah had said earlier,

If the Lord of Hosts hadn't left us offspring,
We would have ended up like Sodom^c—
We would have been just like Gomorrah.^d

³⁰So how shall we put it? Nations that had never pursued right living *achieved* right living^e—but it was a right living that came out of faith. ³¹But Israel, in going after

^a Lit. "O human being, to the contrary!" Paul's point is that their argument leads straight to its own defeat. If your chosen defense against being blamed by God for your behavior is that God made you that way, then you equally remove any right to blame God if God should decide to unmake you.

^b Lit. "prepared for loss/destruction." Paul's metaphor of the household vessels is still active: everyday pots inevitably get broken sooner or later.

^c Prn. *sodd-am*.

^d Prn. *gom-moer-a*.

^e "Right living" (here and in further instances); or, "justice"—traditionally: "righteousness."

a law of right living within the Law, never got there. ³²And why? Because they weren't going after it on the basis of faith, but on the basis of doing what the Law requires. They tripped over the tripping stone, ³³just like the scripture says:^a

Look! I am putting a stone in Zion that is easy to trip over,
And a rock that offends.^b

And the person that puts faith in him will not be brought to shame.^c

10 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire, and my plea to God for them, is for them to be saved. ²After all, I give them this: they have a zeal for God. But it's not really informed, ³because they don't know about God's version of right living. And in trying to set up their own version of right living, they haven't submitted to God's—⁴because Christ is the completion of the Law, which leads to right living for everyone who believes.

⁵Now, as for the right living that comes out of the Law, Moses puts it this way:

The person who has lived right^d will live because of it.

⁶But the right living that comes out of faith puts it like this:

Don't say in your heart, "Who is going to go up into heaven?"

(That is, to bring Christ down.)

⁷And don't say, "Who is going to go down into the abyss?"

(That is, to bring Christ up from among the dead.) ⁸No, what it says is:

The word is right near you!
It's on your lips and in your heart.^e

That's the word about faith that we're preaching: ⁹that^f if you openly acknowledge Jesus as Lord with your lips, and you believe in your heart that God raised him from among the dead, you'll be saved. ¹⁰Because a person believes in Jesus with their heart, which leads to being found innocent.⁸ And they openly acknowledge Jesus with their lips, which leads to salvation. ¹¹After all, scripture says,

No one who believes in him will ever be ashamed.^h

^a Lit. "just as it is written."

^b Lit. "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."

^c Isa. 28:16.

^d Lit. "done it," referring to living right, not to the Law, quoting Lev. 18:5.

^e For this sequence of quotations, see Deut. 9:4; 30:12-14.

^f Or "...preaching. Because."

⁸ Or "which leads to right living"; traditionally: "which leads to righteousness," or "which leads to justification." See "Bible Words," under "justify, justification."

^h Isa. 28:16.

¹²And there's no distinction between the Jew and the non-Jew.^a After all, the same Lord is over all people, and he is rich in generosity to everyone who calls on him:

¹³Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.^b

¹⁴So how are they going to call on somebody that they haven't trusted? And how are they going to trust somebody that they've never heard of? And how are they ever going to hear about him without a preacher? ¹⁵And how are they going to preach if they're never sent? Just like the scripture says,^c

How beautiful are the feet of those who are bringing good news!^d

¹⁶But not everyone has paid attention to the good news. As Isaiah says,

Lord, who has believed our message?^e

¹⁷So the faith comes from the message, and the message comes through the word about Christ. ¹⁸But I might say, "Can it be that they didn't *hear*^f it?" No:

Their voice has gone out to the whole earth,
And their words have reached to the corners of the inhabited world.^g

¹⁹Again,^h I might say, "Can it be that Israel didn't know?" Moses says from the first:

I'm going to make you jealous over a non-nation;ⁱ
I am going to make you angry over an ignorant nation.^j

²⁰And Isaiah is bold enough to say,

I was found by those who didn't seek me;
I revealed myself to those who didn't ask for me.^k

²¹But to Israel God says,

All day I reached out my hands to a disobedient and rebellious people.^l

11 So I ask, surely God hasn't rejected his people, has he? Absolutely not! After all, I am also an Israelite, from the offspring of Abraham and the tribe of Benjamin. ²No,

^a Lit. "between Jew and Greek."

^b Joel 2:32.

^c Lit. "just as it is written."

^d Isa. 52:7.

^e Isa. 53:1.

^f This word should be emphasized in reading. The question is incredulous.

^g Ps. 19:4. Notice Paul's loose prooftexting style.

^h Lit. "But."

ⁱ The syllable "non" should be emphasized in reading.

^j Deut. 32:21.

^k Isa. 65:1.

^l Isa. 65:2. "People" here and below is singular, referring to the nation or ethnic group of Israel.

God has not rejected his people.^a

He knew them before they ever were. Or maybe you didn't know what scripture says in the Elijah story. This is how he pleads with God against Israel:

3Lord, they've killed your prophets and torn down your altars,
and I'm the only one left.

And they're even trying to take my life!^b

4But what does God^c say to him?

I have kept seven thousand men for myself, who haven't knelt down to Baal.^d

5So it's the same way at this moment in history. A remnant^e has been chosen by grace. 6And if it's by grace, then it isn't on the basis of doing what the Law requires anymore. Otherwise grace wouldn't be grace anymore. 7So what's the result? The very thing that Israel is seeking, they haven't gotten, yet the chosen ones have gotten it. But the rest have become hardened. 8As scripture says,^f

God has given them a spirit of sleepiness:
Eyes that don't see, and ears that don't hear,
Right up to this day.^g

9And David says,

Let their table turn into a snare and a trap,
And something that trips them up,
And into something that repays them!
10Let their eyes go dark so that they can't see,
And let their backs be hunched over forever!^h

11So I ask: They didn't trip so that they would fall, did they? Absolutely not! But their offense spelled the salvation of the Gentiles, so that they would get jealous. 12And if their offense was a windfallⁱ for the world, and their failure was a windfall for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! 13I'm now talking to you who are Gentiles. Given the fact that I was sent to the Gentiles, I make a lot of this

^a 1 Sam. 12:22.

^b 1 Kgs 19:10, 14.

^c Lit. "the oracle."

^d Prn. *baal*. That's a Canaanite god. 1 Kgs 19:18.

^e See "Bible Words."

^f Lit. "Just as it is written."

^g Deut. 29:4; Isa. 29:10.

^h Ps. 69:22-23; 35:8.

ⁱ Lit. "wealth." The analogy is as though they just came into a huge fortune. We call that sort of sudden wealth "a windfall."

^j Lit. "I glorify."

ministry of mine. ¹⁴That's so that, if I can, I will get my own family^a jealous and save some of them. ¹⁵After all, if their rejection spells the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be? Won't it be resurrection from among the dead?

¹⁶And if the first portion of dough is holy, so is the main lump. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷But suppose^b some of the branches were broken off. And suppose that you, a wild olive tree, were grafted in among the branches. You would then share in the benefit of the rich root of the olive tree. ¹⁸Don't brag at the expense of the branches that were broken off. And if you do brag against them, remember: you don't support the root—the root supports you. ¹⁹So you're going to say, "Branches were broken off, so that I could be grafted in!" ²⁰Fair enough. It was because of faithlessness that they were broken off, and you've stood in their place because of faith. Don't get big ideas about yourself, but instead be afraid. ²¹After all, if God didn't spare the natural branches, he won't spare you either. ²²So notice the kindness—and the ruthlessness^c—of God. Those who fell got ruthlessness, but you got the kindness of God—that is, if you continue on in God's kindness. Otherwise you'll be cut off too. ²³And if they don't continue on in faithlessness, they'll be grafted in, because God is able to graft them back in again. ²⁴Isn't it true that you were broken out of your native wild olive tree, and were grafted against nature into a cultivated olive tree? If so, won't these branches all the more be grafted into their own native tree? ²⁵Now, I want you to understand this secret,^d brothers and sisters, so that you don't think too highly of yourselves.^e A partial hardening has come about in Israel, until the time when the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶It's just like the scripture says:^f

The Rescuer is going to come from Zion,^g
 And will turn godlessness away from Jacob.
²⁷And this is going to be my covenant with them,
 When I take away their sins.^h

²⁸So in terms of the good news, they are enemies because of you. But in terms of God's choice, they are loved because of the ancestors. ²⁹Because the gifts and calling of God can't be taken back. ³⁰So the result is, once you were disobedient to God—but now mercy has been given to you, because of their disobedience. ³¹In other words, they have been disobedient because of God's mercy to you, so that

^a Lit. "flesh."

^b Lit. "if." This is a very long sentence that I have restructured.

^c Or "severity," lit. "sheerness." Ruthlessness should be read here as potentially positive in its meaning, as in "ruthless honesty." It's about being willing to carry forward in action towards the best long-term outcome, despite full knowledge of grievous consequences in the short term.

^d Lit. "I do not want you to be ignorant of this secret."

^e Lit. "so that you aren't wise in yourselves."

^f Lit. "just as it is written."

^g See "Bible Words."

^h Isa. 59:20-21.

they too will now receive God's mercy. ³²God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience in order to have mercy on everyone.

³³God's wealth and wisdom and knowledge are so deep!^a His decisions are so far beyond comprehension, and his ways are so impossible to trace!

³⁴Who has known the Lord's mind?

Who has ever gotten to be his counselor?^b

³⁵Who ever lent anything to him, and can expect to be repaid?^c

After all, absolutely everything is *from* him and *because of* him and *for* him. May he get the glory for all ages! Amen.

Living for God

12 So, brothers and sisters, let me^d appeal to you on the basis of God's mercy. Present your bodies as a living, holy and pleasing sacrifice to God. That's your true priestly service.^e ²And don't get drawn into the pattern of this world. Instead, be transformed by the total renewal of your mind. That way you'll be able to discern God's will: the things he sees as good, pleasing, and perfect.

³I also say to every one of you, through the grace that's been given to me: don't get bigger ideas about yourself than you should. Instead, be clear-headed. Think in terms of God giving each of you a portion of faith. ⁴After all, we have many parts in our one body—and the parts don't all have the same function. ⁵And in the same way, there are lots of us, yet we are one body in Christ. Each one of us is a member with^f all the others. ⁶And we all have gifts, according to God's grace, which is given out in a different way to each of us.

If it's prophecy, the grace comes out in proportion to the person's faith. ⁷If it's service, it comes out in their service. If someone is a teacher, it comes out in their teaching. ⁸If someone is gifted with encouraging people, it comes out in their encouragement. The giver gives wholeheartedly, the leader leads enthusiastically, the person who serves the needy does it joyfully.

⁹Your love should be genuine. Let's keep completely away from evil, and hold on tightly to what's good. ¹⁰Be loving and affectionate to one another, and outdo^g one another in behaving honorably.^h ¹¹Don't let your enthusiasm go limp: be fueled by the Spirit and serve the Lord. ¹²Be joyful in the hope that you have. Hold out

^a Lit. "O the depth of wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God!"

^b Isa. 40:13; Job 15:8; Jer. 23:18.

^c Lit. "and will be repaid." Job 35:7; 41:11 (MT).

^d "Let me": lit. "I."

^e Lit. "...God, your rational service." He's talking about offering one's body to God in the mind and the heart, as opposed to a literal offering of the body on an altar.

^f Lit. "of."

^g Lit. "go ahead of" or "lead."

^h Or "put one another ahead (of yourselves) in honor."

under persecution, and be determined in prayer. ¹³Share with the holy ones in need, and be active in^a hospitality.

Living as a Christian in Society

¹⁴Bless people who persecute you. Definitely bless them and don't curse them. ¹⁵Be joyful with people who are feeling joyful; cry with people who are crying. ¹⁶Stay in close agreement with one another. Don't be having big thoughts about yourselves—instead, let humble thoughts draw you away from pride. Don't be getting clever in your own opinion.

¹⁷Don't pay back nastiness with nastiness.^b Keep in mind what everyone would think was good.^c ¹⁸Do everything possible on your end to be at peace with all people.^d ¹⁹Don't take revenge for yourselves, dear friends. Instead, leave it to God's wrath. After all, scripture says,^e

Revenge is mine—
I will pay them back, says the Lord.^f

²⁰However,

If your enemy is hungry, feed the person.
If your enemy is thirsty, give the person a drink.
Because if you do this,
You will pile burning coals on the person's head.^g

²¹Don't let what's bad conquer you; instead, conquer what's bad with goodness.

13 Everybody should be obedient to the authorities that are over them. After all, there is no authority that isn't under God. And the “powers that be” are set in place by God. ²So the person who rebels against authority is resisting God's order. And those who resist bring judgment on themselves. ³Rulers aren't anything to be afraid of for doing good, but only for doing what's bad. You don't want to be afraid of the government? Do good, and you'll get praise from it. ⁴It's God's servant for your own good. But if you do something bad, you should be afraid. After all, the government doesn't have the sword for nothing. Again,^h it's God's servant. It's the instrument of wrath towards the person who does what is bad. ⁵So it's necessary to be obedient. Not just because of God's wrath, but because of conscience. ⁶After all, this is why you pay taxes, which serve God in exactly this

^a Lit. “actively pursue.”

^b Lit. “Don't return to anyone bad for bad.” Lev. 19:18.

^c Lattimore: “Have good intentions in regard to all men.”

^d Lit. “If possible, from yourselves, being peaceful with all people.” He's addressing the Christian community in their relationship to the wider community.

^e Lit. “For it is written.”

^f Deut. 32:35.

^g Prov. 25:21-22.

^h Lit. “for,” but linking back to the previous similar statement.

way.^a 7 Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to the tax collector, tolls to the toll collector. Respect whoever you should respect; honor whoever you should honor.

8 Don't owe anyone anything except to love one another. The person that loves someone else has fulfilled the Law.^b 9 There's "Don't break your marriage vows,"^c "Don't murder," "Don't steal," "Don't covet,"^d and whatever other commandment there is—all of them are summed up in this one statement: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."^e 10 Love never does wrong to a neighbor, so love is the fulfillment of the Law.

11 And do all this knowing what moment we're in in history: it's already time for you to wake up from sleep. Our salvation is nearer now than when we first became believers.^f 12 The night is nearly over, and the day is almost here. So let's throw off ways that belong to the darkness, and put on the armor of light. 13 Let's conduct ourselves decently, like we're in the daytime. There shouldn't be any orgies, drunkenness, sexual promiscuity,^g petty fighting, and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and don't create any opportunity for your flesh to lust.

Living as a Christian among Your Fellow Christians

14 Also, accept people that are weak in faith, without arguing every point.^h 1 One person believes they can eat anything, but a weak person may only eat vegetables.ⁱ 2 The person who eats meat shouldn't despise the person who doesn't eat it. And the person who doesn't eat meat shouldn't pass judgment on the person who does, since God has accepted them. 3 Who are you to pass judgment on somebody else's servant? It's up to the person's own boss whether they stand or fall. And they *will* stand, because the Lord is able to hold^j them up. 4 So,^k one person regards one day as better in relation to another, and another person regards every day the same. Each person should be convinced in their own mind. 5 The person who regards a day as special regards it that way for the Lord. And the person who eats meat eats it for the Lord, since they're giving

^a Lit. "for they are God's servants attending to this very purpose."

^b Or, less likely: "The person that loves has fulfilled whatever other law there might be."

^c Traditionally: "do not commit adultery" (see "Bible Words").

^d Exod. 20:13-15, 17. See "Bible Words" under "covet."

^e Lev. 19:18.

^f Or simply, "believed."

^g Lit. "sex and recklessness/licentiousness." Paul is not against sex between married people, so he's talking about casual, thoughtless sex.

^h Lit. "not for deciding arguments."

ⁱ The context is that some people won't eat any meat unless they are sure the meat has not at some point been offered to an idol. Paul's advice is, don't make fun of the person and try to argue them out of their feelings of conscience. Trust them to work it out.

^j Lit. "stand."

^k Lit. "For."

thanks to God. And the person who doesn't eat meat avoids eating meat for the Lord, and also gives thanks to God. ⁷After all, none of us lives for ourselves, and none of us dies for ourselves. ⁸So if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹This is the reason Jesus died and lived: so that he could be Lord both of the dead and of the living. ¹⁰So you—why do you judge your brother or sister? And you—why do you despise your brother or sister? After all, we're all going to stand in front of the judgment bench of God. ¹¹Because scripture says,^a

By my life,^b says the Lord, every knee is going to bend to me, and every tongue is going to admit that I am God.^c

¹²So each of us is going to have to give an account for ourselves to God.

¹³So let's stop judging each other. Instead, determine this: not to put an obstacle in front of a brother or sister or anything that will trip them up. ¹⁴I know—in fact, I'm convinced—in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unholy^d in and of itself. However, if someone considers something unholy, it is unholy for *them*. ¹⁵So^e if your brother or sister is harmed because of food that you eat, then you aren't walking in line with love anymore. Don't destroy a person Christ died for, by the food you eat!

¹⁶In conclusion,^f don't let what is good for you be insulted. ¹⁷After all, the kingdom of God isn't about food and drinks, but about right living^g and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸The person who serves Christ in this way is both pleasing to God and respected^h by other people. ¹⁹So let's strive forⁱ the things that lead to peace, and the things that build each other up. ²⁰Don't ruin God's work for the sake of food. All foods are pure, but it's still bad for a person to eat something that offends them.^j ²¹It's better not to eat meat or to drink alcohol,^k or to do anything that offends your brother or sister. ²²You have faith, and you should hold it yourself in front of God. The blessed person is the person that doesn't condemn themselves by what they approve of. ²³But the person that doubts gets condemned if they eat, because it's not from faith, and everything that's not from faith is sin.

^a Lit. "For it is written."

^b Lit. "I live."

^c Or "every tongue is going to confess to God." Isa. 49:18; 45:23. Compare Phil. 2:10-11.

^d Lit. "common," which is the opposite of "sacred," or "holy."

^e Lit. "for."

^f Lit. "So—." He's summarizing what he's just been saying in vv. 1-15, not basing a conclusion on it.

^g Or "integrity" or "justice"; traditionally: "righteousness" (see "Bible Words").

^h Lit. "esteemed." It's about having a good reputation.

ⁱ Lit. "pursue."

^j Lit. "to eat through offense." Lattimore: "it is bad for a man to eat in a way that will mislead." The Greek is ambiguous.

^k Lit. "wine."

15 Those of us who are strong have a duty to support the weak points^a of those who aren't strong. And we shouldn't just please ourselves: each of us should be working towards what's good for our neighbor: what will build them up.^b After all, even Christ didn't please himself—just the opposite. Like the scripture says,^c

The insults of those who insulted you landed^d on me.^e

All scriptures written in the past were written for our education. Their purpose is for us to have hope, which comes from the endurance and encouragement that the scriptures give.^f And may the God of endurance and encouragement give you the gift of being like-minded with one another, in agreement with^g Christ Jesus. That way, you'll all have one purpose, and you'll glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one voice.^h

So accept one another, just as Christ accepted you for God's glory. After all, Christ has come to be a servant of the Jewish people,ⁱ standing for the truth of God. That way, the promises made to the ancestors are going to be confirmed, and the Gentiles will glorify God for his mercy. Like the scripture says,^j

Because of this I'm going to proclaim you among the Gentiles,
and I'm going to sing of your name.^k

And another place^l says:

Celebrate, Gentiles, with God's people!^m

And here's another:

Honor the Lord, all you Gentiles,
And praise him, all you peoples!ⁿ

^a Lit. "to bear the weaknesses." But he doesn't mean "bear" in the sense of being patient with their weaknesses, nor does he mean to give them a permanent crutch that coddles them in their weakness. He means to function as a team. If a person is limping, you give them a hand on the journey.

^b Lit. "Each of us should please what leads to the good of our neighbor for edification." In English you can't please an abstract thing.

^c Lit. "just as it is written."

^d Lit. "fell."

^e Ps. 69:9.

^f Lit. "For as many things as were written before, were written for our instruction, so that, through the endurance and encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope."

^g Lit. "according to."

^h Lit. "mouth."

ⁱ Lit. "of the circumcision."

^j Lit. "just as it is written."

^k Ps. 18:49.

^l Lit. "And again."

^m Deut. 32:43.

ⁿ Ps. 117:1.

¹²And here's another, where Isaiah says,

The root of Jesse is going to come,
And he is going to rise up to rule the Gentiles.
On him the Gentiles will place their hope.^a

¹³So^b may the God of hope fill you up completely with joy and peace as you trust Jesus, so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's Reason for Writing This Letter

¹⁴I'm personally convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you are full of goodness: that you're fully knowledgeable and able to counsel one another.^c ¹⁵Still, I've written to you a bit boldly sometimes. It's like I'm reminding you, by the grace that's been given to me by God. ¹⁶That way, I'm like a priest of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles. I'm serving the good news of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles^d will be totally acceptable, made holy by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷So in Christ Jesus, I can actually say that I serve God as a priest.^e ¹⁸Of course,^f I am not about to talk about anything that Christ didn't work *through* me for the obedience of the Gentiles—by my speech and my actions, ¹⁹by powerful miracles^g and wonders, and by the power of the Spirit. I've finally fully preached the good news of Christ—from Jerusalem, and all the way around as far as Illyricum.^h ²⁰And all along, it's been my passion to preach the good news where Christ has never been named. That way, I won't be building on someone else's foundation. ²¹No, just like the scripture says,ⁱ

People who never got news of him will see him,
And people who've never heard will understand.^j

²²That's also why I've been kept back from coming to you so many times. ²³But now I don't have anyplace to call home in all those places. And for many years, I've been longing to visit you ²⁴on my way to Spain. In other words,^k I hope to get to see you on my way through, and to be sent on to Spain by you,^l after enjoying a bit of your company. ²⁵But now I'm serving the holy ones by going to Jerusalem—²⁶because Macedonia and Achaia thought it would be good to share

^a Isa. 11:10.

^b Lit. "And."

^c Lit. "to advise/admonish/warn one another."

^d This is a paradoxical double meaning. The Gentiles bring an offering; the Gentiles are the offering.

^e Lit. "Therefore I have the things of God as the/my/a boast in Christ Jesus." See Heb. 5:1, where the identical formula, "the things of God," refers to the responsibilities of a priest in the Temple.

^f Lit. "For."

^g Lit. "signs."

^h Prn. ill-*yir-ik-am*.

ⁱ Lit. "On the contrary, just as it is written."

^j Isa. 52:15.

^k Lit. "For."

^l The word translated as "to be sent on" usually implies helping the person with funds and provisions for the journey.

something with the holy ones that are poor^a in Jerusalem.^b ²⁷Yes, they thought it would be good, and after all,^c they owe it to them. Because if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual gifts, then the Gentiles also owe it to them to serve them with practical gifts.^d ²⁸So, when I've finished this task, and I've stamped "delivery complete" on this harvest gift^e for them, then I'll set off for Spain via Rome.^f ²⁹And I know that when I come to you, I'm going to come full^g of Christ's blessing!

³⁰And I really want to ask your help with something, brothers and sisters. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, please join me as I struggle hard in prayers for myself, in God's presence.^h ³¹Pray that I'll be saved from the people who are disobedient in Judea,ⁱ and that my service in going to Jerusalem will turn out to be totally acceptable to the holy ones. ³²That way, I'll be joyful when I come to you by the will of God, and I'll enjoy some rest with you. ³³And may the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

Final Greetings

16 I'd like to introduce our sister Phoebe^j to you. She's a deacon^k of the community in Cenchrae.^l ¹I want you to receive her in the Lord in a way that's worthy of the holy ones. And please give her whatever help she might need from you. After all, she's been a financial support person to lots of people, including me personally.^m

³Say hellos to Prisca and Aquila,ⁿ my co-workers in Christ Jesus. ⁴They've risked their own necks to protect me.^o I'm not the only one who is grateful to them—so are all the Gentile communities. ⁵And say hello to the community that meets at their house.

Say hello to my dear friend Epaenetus.^p He's Asia's first offering to Christ. ⁶Say hello to Mary, who has worked very hard for you.

^a Lit. "the poor among the holy ones."

^b See Acts 19:21; 20:22.

^c Lit. "For they thought it good, and."

^d Spiritual gifts/practical gifts: lit. "spiritual things/ fleshy things."

^e Lit. "fruit"; perhaps he's thinking of it metaphorically as sharing a portion of the harvest with the Jerusalem priests.

^f Lit. "I'll go off to Spain via you."

^g Lit. "in the fullness."

^h Lit. "in front of God."

ⁱ Prn. joo-dee-a.

^j Prn. fee-bee.

^k A deacon, or "server," is a person entrusted with arranging provision for the practical needs of the spiritual community and its members.

^l Prn. semn-kree-ay.

^m Lit. "she has been a benefactor to many, and to me myself."

ⁿ Prn. a-kwill-a.

^o Lit. "on behalf of my life."

^p Prn. a-peen-eet-us.

7 Say hellos to Andronicus and Junias,^a my fellow expatriates^b and prison mates. They are famous as apostles,^c and they were in Christ before me.

8 Say hello to Ampliatus,^d my dear friend in the Lord. 9 Say hello to Urbanus,^e my fellow worker in Christ, and to my dear friend Stachys.^f 10 Say hello to Apelles^g—he’s tried and true^h in Christ. Say hellos to the people at Aristobulus’sⁱ house. 11 Say hello to Herodian,^j my fellow expatriate.^k Say hellos to the people at Narcissus’s house who are in the Lord. 12 Say hellos to Tryphaena and Tryphosa,^l hard workers in the Lord. Say hello to my dear friend Persis. She’s done so much hard work in the Lord! 13 Say hellos to Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and to his mother (mine too)! 14 Say hellos to Asynchretus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobus,^m Hermas, and to the brothers and sisters with them. 15 Say hellos to Philologusⁿ and Julia, Nereus^o and his sister, and Olympas,^p and all the holy ones with them.

16 Say hellos all around^q with a holy kiss. All the communities of Christ say hello to you.

17 Now I really ask you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on people who create divisions and things to trip over—who work against the teaching that you’ve learned. Avoid them!^r 18 Because people like that don’t serve our Lord Jesus Christ—no, they serve their own selfish guts. And by using nice-sounding words and flattery, they trick innocent people. 19 After all, your obedience to God has touched everyone. So I’m really happy about you, and I want you to be sophisticated when it comes to the truth, but inexperienced when it comes to what’s bad. 20 And the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you!

^a Prn. *an-dronn-ic-us* and *joo-nee-us*. Junias may be read as “Junia.” Whether Junia(s) is a he or a she is unknown, but presumably Paul wouldn’t have been imprisoned together with a woman.

^b Lit. “relatives” or “kinfolk.” In view of the context (they became Christians before Paul, so are very likely Judeans/Israelites; they live in Rome, and Paul is constantly traveling), the natural wording in English is “my fellow expatriates” (see Rom. 9:3 for the same term).

^c Traditionally: “among the apostles.” See “Bible Words.”

^d Prn. *am-plee-ayt-us*.

^e Prn. *ur-bayn-us*.

^f Prn. *stay-kis*.

^g Prn. *ap-pell-eez*.

^h “Tried and true”: the Greek word means tested, esteemed, or both.

ⁱ Prn. *ar-i-stobb-you-less-izz*.

^j Prn. *her-road-ee-an*.

^k Lit. “kinsman”; see the nt. on this term in Rom. 16:7.

^l Prn. *try-feen-a* and *try-foe-a*.

^m Prn. *a-sin-kra-tas*, *flee-gan*, *her-meez*, *pat-ro-bas*.

ⁿ Prn. *fil-lol-ag-us*.

^o Prn. *neer-ee-us*.

^p Prn. *oh-limp-as*.

^q Or “Greet one another.”

^r Lit. “Turn away from them.”

21 My co-worker Timothy says hello to you! So do Luke and Jason and Sosipater,^a fellow expatriates^b of mine.

22 Hello in the Lord from me, Tertius!^c I'm the one who transcribed this letter.
23 Gaius^d says hello to you—he's my host, and also hosts the whole community here. Erastus,^e the city treasurer, says hello to you, and so does Quartus, his brother.^f

Paul's Closing Prayer

24 So,^g glory to God, the One who is able to strengthen you in the good news that I preach about Jesus Christ—in the revelation of the secret that was kept sealed up for long ages! 25 Yet now, through the prophetic scriptures, it has been brought out into the open by the command of the Eternal God. He did this so that the obedience of faith would be revealed to all the Gentiles!^h 26 Glory to the One Wise God, through Jesus Christ! To him be glory for all eternity!ⁱ Amen.

^a Pm. soe-**sip**-pa-ter.

^b Lit. "kinsmen"; see the nt. on this term in Rom.16:7.

^c Pm. **ter**-shess.

^d Pm. **gay**-us.

^e Pm. er-**rast**-us.

^f Some of the oldest and most reliable mss omit v. 24: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." A few late mss add it after v. 27.

^g Lit. "And." He's switching gears and wrapping up the letter now.

^h Or, "made known to all the nations."

ⁱ From the words "So, glory to God..." this is all one enormous long sentence—a final flourish. If you take out the punctuation and read all the regular type words, you can catch how it goes.