

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a light gray color, frames the central text. The border is composed of repeating motifs of leaves and scrolls, creating a classic, elegant frame.

**A Layman's  
Commentary on  
Romans**

**T.O.D. Johnston**

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A Layman's Commentary on The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Religious Non-fiction

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Table of Contents

Preface		-	5
Lesson I	-	1:1-7	- 6
Lesson II	-	1:8-32	- 9
Lesson III	-	2:1-29	- 13
Lesson IV	-	3:1-31	- 18
Lesson V	-	4:1-25	- 23
Lesson VI	-	5:1-21	- 28
Lesson VII	-	6:1-23	- 33
Lesson VIII	-	7:1-13	- 37
Lesson IX	-	7:14-25; 8:1-11	- 41
Lesson X	-	8:12-31	- 45
Lesson XI	-	8:32-39; 9:1-16	- 50
Lesson XII	-	9:17-33; 10:1-11	- 55
Lesson XIII	-	10:12-21; 11:1-10	- 60
Lesson XIV	-	11:11-36	- 65
Lesson XV	-	12:1-21	- 70
Lesson XVI	-	13:1-14	- 74
Lesson XVII	-	14:1-23	- 77
Lesson XVIII	-	15:1-33	- 81
Lesson XIX	-	16:1-27	- 87
Bibliography		-	92

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A Layman's Commentary  
On The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans:  
Composed In 19 Lessons

1st Edition - 2012  
Written by T.O.D. Johnston  
Published by Owen Johnston  
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Dedicated for knowledge, understanding, and inspiration as we seek to follow Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ.

Preface

After reading many scholarly commentaries on different books of Scripture, it became my mental habit to sift through the minute discussions of individual words and/or phrases, and the quoting of various scholars of the past of many differing opinions, and center on the most logical and inspirational truths that remained. Thus I relied on the studied scholarship of those who had learned the original languages and had read all the previous scholars that had written to get the best possible understanding of Scripture that I, as a non-scholar, could. It seemed that most church members would not attempt to read scholarly works - but would benefit from their knowledge if presented in a plain and straightforward manner, the truths they had perceived. The following commentary is my attempt to do this. May God bless my efforts to the extent that they increase the understanding and faith of the reader.

T.O.D. Johnston  
2005

### Lesson I: Introduction

When Paul wrote this letter, he had not visited there. He knew about the group of believers. His communication was intended to give a full account of his experience, and knowledge, and understanding of all aspects of the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. Included also was the direct revelation he received from the risen Savior, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In addition, he was completely familiar with the Jews' system of religion and tradition, since he had been educated by the best teachers and had been a most zealous advocate for Judaism. At this point, he had frequently disputed with the Jews in every detail of their arguments against his.

His letter to the Romans was sent to the center of the ruling power of the 'civilized' world at that time. It was a great metropolis where a large and very mixed population lived. Christians, Jews, pagans, heathens, slaves, soldiers, politicians, philosophers, and the emperor. Paul was aware of this and kept this in mind when composing this letter. He wanted to clearly and carefully instruct the believing Jews in the central truths of Christianity, which would disprove the points that the unbelieving Jews held onto. This truth would convince idolatrous Gentiles unto conversion and faith in Christ.

In short, he argues and opposes the unbelieving Jews, and strongly proclaims the Gospel. It also insists upon principles of service unto God, and Christian fellowship. This was especially important for believing Jews to correctly and equally treat believing Gentiles with brotherly love. Each and every one who professes faith in Christ, and service to Him, is accepted as a member of the true visible Church, and is equal to all others, with all of the same privileges and rights.

The letter consists of 4 divisions.

#### Part I:

In the first five chapters, he explains the riches of Divine grace, free to all mankind. Jews and Gentiles are equally sinful. This was shown as the way that Abraham was justified – by faith. All men became sinners as consequence of Adam's sin. Christ's obedience redeemed mankind from the death penalty of sin, providing the way for eternal life to all who believe. This is what the Law of Moses could not do – for no one (except Christ) could fulfill it.

#### Part II:

Paul explains the obligations of the believer to new life of piety and virtue. Chapter 6 relates to Gentile Christians. In chapter 8, and part of 9, he addresses the Jewish Christians. In the rest of chapter 9 he addresses both groups. He brings out the resulting difficulties they would be exposed to – persecution and suffering – which would be strong influences to deter them from their duty as believers, following Christ. Paul asserts strongly the certain perseverance of all who love God, in spite of any infirmities or trials in this world. God will provide the strength.

#### Part III.

Paul clearly delineates the correct way to interpret the rejection of the Jews – and how this was God's plan, so that the rest of mankind could be offered His Salvation. This made the Gentiles as equal to Jewish believers.

#### Part IV.

Paul encourages (exhorts) certain Christian duties. He concludes with greetings to and from particular people.

To correctly grasp this epistle, we must keep readily in mind the beliefs and attitudes and traditions of the Jews, in their complete and utter aversion to Gentiles, as base, coarse, idolatrous heathens. The Jews claimed Abraham, circumcision, their religious laws and worship, and their own righteousness as reasons for having any right to God's favor.

The purpose and effect of the Gospel message was accompanied with the working and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Spread by a few men of low estate in that world of Roman power, deep-rooted prejudices, pagan religion, and idolatry, the best education and philosophy. And yet the truth, dignity, and virtue of the message confronted and gained victory upon victory in the hearts of those who heard and believed. The truth of the love of God to all men was never before so clearly taught, and experienced – bringing the joy, hope, faith, and peace that the world cannot. The resulting writings of the New Testament of Jesus Christ was, is, and ever shall be the only writings with that promise and power to change lives, always for each individual's greatest life and future.

The year of the writing of this epistle was around 58 A.D.

Romans 1:1-7.

#### Salutation

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of  
God,  
2 (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures,)  
3 concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David  
according to the flesh;  
4 and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the  
resurrection from the dead:  
5 by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all  
nations, for his name:  
6 among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:  
7 ¶ To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:  
¶ Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Verse 1.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. The Greek word here translates to servant – more correctly, it means a slave, one who belongs to, is the property of his master. He was expressing that as far as he was concerned, his life and energy belonged to his Lord, and would be spent in doing His will. 'I am wholly the Lord's.'

Called to be an apostle – an exceptional, special messenger sent by God Himself to deliver the most important message: to preach the Gospel of Salvation through Christ to all people (nations). Paul was claiming Divine authority to set straight the matters that were in dispute, concerning that beginning Church. This was especially true with the Roman group because their beliefs had not been founded and guided by an apostle.

Before, Paul had been separated not only as a Jew, but also a Pharisee. Now, he was separated unto the Gospel of God.

#### Verse 2.

The Gospel that God had promised afore time, in the law, and the Prophets, was a more perfect and glorious state of things. This would take place through the Messiah, Who would bring spiritual life and eternity by His Good News.

Verse 3.

The Messiah was God's Son, of the royal line in His humanity, son of David, rightful heir of the throne of Israel.

Verse 4.

He was undeniably shown to be the Son of God, through His conception, birth, preaching, miracles, passion, death, His resurrection – His life, His teaching – all were true. Also, the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises and prophecies was further proof.

The uniqueness of Christ's resurrection was the greatest proof: only the power of God, His miraculous energy, spiritual and holy, could accomplish this. This same power (the Holy Spirit) was sent to Christ's followers with gifts and graces in His Name. This same Holy Spirit, from that time to this time, influences people – convinces of sin, righteousness and judgment; by faith, people are converted and set apart unto a new life, as children of God with an eternal inheritance.

Verse 5.

Without the special favor and unique help of God, Paul could never have been an apostle. His conversion was extraordinary, as was his call to preach the Gospel. Obedience to the faith – his job, by call and power of God – had one purpose: to proclaim the faith in the truth of the Gospel of Jesus. He was responsible to proclaim this way of salvation to all nations. Obedience was the necessary consequence of genuine faith. All people were to be granted the opportunity to hear and choose to believe and be saved.

Verse 6.

Paul here identifies these Romans as having been invited to believe in Christ Jesus, for the salvation of their souls. His mission is directed to them.

Verse 7.

They are also identified as 'beloved of God, called to be saints'. They accepted the Gospel and received the Holy Spirit and the gifts thereof. Paul wishes them grace – divine favor, the source of every blessing. Grace being unmerited or earned favor. This is in stark contrast to the Law, where favor could only be acquired by perfect obedience, which no one could attain. Jesus fulfilled this for us, and only through Him do we receive God's grace. We also receive peace, signifying harmony and the bond of unity, reconciliation, friendship, and good order. This includes working to preserve peace and against confusion. It also signifies the Gospel and its blessings. This peace brings contentment and happiness, through confidence in believing in Jesus as Savior. The source of this peace is God the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, Paul commends them for their faith, and expresses his heartfelt desire to visit them, to impart to them spiritual gifts, and give them the most complete description of Christ's Good News.



## Lesson II

Romans 1:8-32. Paul's Desire to See Them, and a Description of their Condition without God.

Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

8 ¶ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

10 making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

The Power of the Gospel

16 ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The Guilt of Mankind

18 ¶ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

24 ¶ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:

25 who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 ¶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

27 and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

28 ¶ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;  
29 being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,  
30 backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,  
31 without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:  
32 who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Verse 8.

After warm greetings, Paul now expresses that he is grateful to God, that through Jesus Christ, that they have such a faith that he has heard about them in his travels.

Verse 9.

Calling God as his witness, Paul – as God's servant – always includes these believers in his prayers – continually. He engages not only his physical energy, but his soul also – his whole being completely certain of the absolute truth of what he communicates about Christ. He may be contrasting this with the traditional worship of the Jews, in all their elaborate ceremonies.

Verse 10.

Paul has for some time been asking God that he could have a prosperous journey to meet with them. As we have seen in Acts 27, he does later, by the will of God, come to Rome, but his journey could be described as disastrous. This happens about 2 years after this letter was written.

Verse 11.

Apparently no apostle had yet been to Rome. The extraordinary spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit were only conferred by means of the apostles. Paul wishes that by his visit he may be the giver of such, that their faith in Christ's Gospel would be the more firmly established. In this way, they were yet different from all the churches that Paul had personally founded.

Verse 12.

He here explains that the joined faith of his and theirs would be greatly beneficial in receiving the blessings from God for their strength and encouragement in the Gospel.

Verse 13.

For a long time, he had wanted to come to them, but was prevented from doing so. His desire was the same as toward other Gentiles – to be of some spiritual benefit to them.

Verse 14.

The Greeks considered all others to be barbarians, foreigners, outsiders. Paul is suggesting that he is under obligation to carry the message of the Gospel to all people. He is only recognizing the inclusion of all nationalities and classes of society – the learned and the unlearned.

Verse 15.

In the time he is being prevented from coming to them by God's providence, he felt it would be beneficial to them if his writing would comfort, instruct, and encourage them.

Verse 16.

Isaiah 28:16 says, 'Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed.' This means that believers will not be disappointed in their faith and hope. This describes the opposite of what happened to the unbelieving Jews. They have been disappointed, ashamed, and confused. They rejected Christ and looked for some other Messiah, leaving themselves outside of God's will and blessing. Believers, on the other hand, have received God's grace in abundance, and the blessings mentioned by the prophets that would come through Christ – the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. And again, to the Jew first, Paul speaking to himself, and addressing the Jews at Rome that had become believers, as well as Greeks.

Verse 17.

God's righteousness is shown in the Gospel of Christ. Sinners are saved by faith, not by works of any law. Abraham, father and founder of the Jewish people, was justified by faith – long before the law was given through Moses. 'The just shall live by faith.' Even the manifold offerings and sacrifices and other religious observances were intended to indicate the true and glorious and final sacrifice for sin, which Christ would fulfill. The Jews put their trust in the observances, the rituals themselves, hoping to earn justification and final salvation by works. For this reason, they rejected Christ.

The just are here defined as those that believe God and act accordingly. Only by continual faith in our Lord can the just live a holy, set apart, useful life.

Verse 18.

Now Paul moves to the main subject of his letter. He is to show the absolute universal corruption of all mankind – therefore the absolute necessity of the Gospel of Christ. Man's sins shouted for God's justice and punishment of the world. The rest of this chapter describes this. All the heathen nations were utterly corrupt. The Jews, in spite of their privileges, were no better. Both of them were equally entitled to be offered God's salvation. God is the creator of all men, as well as the whole world.

God's wrath indicates that His righteousness is greatly displeased. This is expressed by His punishments upon the godless, and the profligate – whose lives are sinful in every way. This would include atheism, polytheism, idolatry of every kind. Also, everything contrary to all morals – things that are cruel and lawless.

To hold the truth in unrighteousness means to maliciously hinder the truth within their hearts and minds, not allowing it to guide their conduct. In this way, they also hinder the truth from being spread in general.

Verses 19,20.

In these two verses, Paul makes a profound observation about how God revealed Himself through the beauty, order, and purposeful operations in the manifest visible universe. In other words, although the Gentiles had no written revelation from God, what may be observed in the visible universe, everywhere, gives witness of Him. Everything – since the creation of the world, if attentively observed – reveal His eternal power and providence. This cancels their excuse of ignorance and their idolatry and wickedness.

God's invisible perfections are openly shown in His visible works – the vastness and variety and complexity, also all the beneficial provisions and adaptations for all life. His eternal power of creation and sustaining His creation show His Godhead – as governing and supporting His universe.

Verse 21.

Paul continues, here explaining their actions in knowing God, but choosing not to be thankful and not to glorify Him. They chose not to proclaim Him to the people, but to enclose

His glory in their mysteries, images made like corruptible man (idols and mythology), thereby turning God's truth into a lie. God punished their sins by allowing their pretense at virtue to degenerate into vile immorality and vice. Their imaginations, or reasonings, became foolish – even the wisest of the Greek philosophers.

Verse 22.

These vain characters made great claims about their wisdom, but their lives conformed to the darkness of the world around them. Scholars have studied the many writings of these ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and found that Paul's observations were accurate.

Verse 23.

Men had made representatives of their deities in human figures – their greatest artists making statues to Hercules, Venus, Apollo. They were described as having human passions, but extraordinary strength, beauty, wisdom, but without true morality, involved in disgraceful actions. The other creatures mentioned most aptly come from the Egyptians – sacred animals as representing forces of nature and the supernatural. These included the ox, the goat, monkey, dog, the four footed beasts. The creeping things – the crocodile and beetle.

Verses 24, 25.

God gave them up to their lusts – thereby allowing them to bring about their own punishment upon their own bodies. They had chosen this path. They had changed the truth about God into a lie, serving the creature more than the Creator.

Verses 26-32.

In the remaining verses of this first chapter, Paul describes in great detail the abominable evils of which there is ample proof, from the Roman and Greek writings still in existence.

As a result, both men and women suffered the consequences: diseases and disorders.

Theirs had been the choice to not seek and reflect on the proofs of God's divine nature. God gave them over to a reprobate mind – one that could not discern or search for the truth of God.

Paul then lists every kind of unrighteousness, contrary to all moral law and justice. The reverse of each and every one of God's Ten Commandments.

It is scary to imagine what human civilization would have continued to devolve into, had God not intervened with the Gospel of Christ and the open ministry to proclaim and enforce it.

In our own day, we are seeing the waning influence of Christianity, and the increasing of behaviors that Paul has described.

We as God's light-bearers of the glorious gospel of His Son must live accordingly as children of God, in Whom there shall be no cause of stumbling, through Christ Who strengthens us.

Lesson III

Romans 2:1-29. Paul Describes the Similar Condition of the Jews, Who Condemn the Gentiles.

The Righteous Judgment of God

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.  
2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.  
3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?  
4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?  
5 but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;  
6 who will render to every man according to his deeds:  
7 to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:  
8 but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,  
9 tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;  
10 but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:  
11 for there is no respect of persons with God.  
12 ¶ For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;  
13 (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.  
14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:  
15 which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)  
16 in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

The Jews and the Law

17 ¶ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,  
18 and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;  
19 and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,  
20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.  
21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?  
22 thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?  
23 thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God?  
24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

25 ¶ For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

26 Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The preceding condemnation of the Gentiles would please the Jews, and seem to justify their attitude that the Gospel should not be offered to them. In this chapter, Paul will effectually prove that the Jews had broken the law of God, continually and in an aggravated manner. He does this carefully, not naming them, but addressing all men who judge others, as those that do the same things.

Verse 1.

Whosoever decides that they have the right to take on the role of a judge to condemn others – because they are guilty of the same sins, is actually condemning themselves.

Verse 2.

On other other hand, God's judgment is according to truth.

Verse 3.

The condemnation of others, when one does the same, does not provide an escape from God's judgment. To God, sin of every kind requires punishment, Jew and Gentile alike.

Verse 4.

Looking at the historical dealings of God with the Jewish people, shows His forbearance and kindness, and long-suffering towards them. All this should have led them to repentance and thankfulness toward Him. But they would not recognize this – they despised it.

Verse 5.

Their choice in continuing in iniquity (hardness and impenitent heart) has only increased their guilt and therefore their punishment unto the day of God's wrath – judgment day. Every man will justly be judged according to works. To treasure up means accumulate an abundance.

Verse 6.

A restating of the previous verse.

Verse 7.

Those who have persevered in seeking to honor God by their deeds will be rewarded in the eternal life.

Verse 8.

But those who choose to reject the truth and therefore choose sin (unrighteousness) will receive God's indignation, wrath, and punishment.

Verse 9.

All descriptions of misery, without any possibility of escape, is certain. To the Jew first, having had greater privileges, but disregarded them, also to the Gentiles, that was guilty of choosing evil in spite of the light they had.

Verse 10.

To all those that 'worketh good' – in obedience to the known will of God that they had – both Jew and Gentile will be rewarded with glory, honor, and peace – eternal blessings.

Verse 11.

God is a fair, impartial, and just judge. His judgment will be based on the simple principle that a person abused the grace which was enough to save him, by choosing to act contrary to its direction and influence. There is no respect of any other values with God.

Verse 12.

The Gentiles, having 'that true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9), they that did not have the law, will perish because they rejected the light they had. The Jew, however, had the positive Divine revelation of the law – therefore, their choice to disobey it brings judgment by the law against them. Having had the great advantage – they will be punished in proportion to their abuse of this advantage.

Verse 13.

The benefit of the law comes not by receiving it (hearing the law). Obedience is required. Only those that chose to live accordingly shall be justified, accounted worthy of the kingdom of God.

Verse 14.

The Gentiles, without the law, do not automatically perish because of this. Also, their sinful conduct will not go unpunished. They have no excuse. 'By nature' means following the light which God imparts to everyone, things expressed in the law – justice, mercy, temperance, and truth. These things are a law unto themselves. Even in the most primitive societies that still exist, these values are recognized and practiced – being necessary for the good order and relationships to maintain that society.

Verse 15.

The greatest object of the law was to turn people from their wicked ways – injustice, cruelty, intemperance, and every falsehood. This was accomplished by the conscience – bearing witness – this faculty in the soul – where the Divine light dwells and works, the measure of what is right. In civil matters, a natural sense of justice guides. That they have this correct sense of right and wrong, they are accountable to God for their choices in reference to these principles. They also accuse or excuse one another in relation to these principles also.

Verse 16.

On Judgment Day, God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ – this will be by God's Gospel – impartially according to the various advantages or disadvantages of their life situation, and the choices they made. Whether they rejected or accepted what truth they had is the standard. In the entire history of man, there is plain evidence in every culture, of laws in a variety of forms that were written down and instituted. These all came from God's imparting in man's soul. Paul says, 'The Spirit of God wrote originally on their hearts.'

Verse 17.

Paul now turns to the advantages God provided to the Jews, and what they have done in response. They 'rested in the law', meaning that they had the strongest trust and confidence of safety and security for their eternal salvation in the law. In addition, they boast about their superior knowledge of God, putting themselves above all others.

Verse 18.

They also know God's will concerning the right way people should live to please God and thereby receive all the benefits that accords.

Verse 19.

They also lay claim to being the only guides to these truths and advantages, to the ignorant and bewildered Gentiles living in darkness. They offer them opportunity to become proselytes in their religion.

Verse 20.

Their attitude toward the Gentiles is shown by how they describe the Gentiles as foolish, and babies, compared to their own true knowledge. They expect that all others should look up to them as the only ones that had this knowledge.

Verses 21-24.

Paul now questions their pride in teaching the Law when they do not follow what they teach in their own lives. Example – do they prove their advantage of knowledge, teaching others not to steal, when they themselves steal? How about adultery, and idolatry, when they do commit adultery, and sacrilege against God? By openly transgressing His law, they contradict their profession. Apparently there had been and continued to be notorious examples of crimes among the Jews. This made their religion without value among the Gentiles. Ezekiel had described it - 'I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them.' (Ezekiel 36:23.)

Josephus described the great corruption of the Jewish priesthood at the time of the apostles – it was all about money and power. The Temple had become a den of thieves. They practiced unjust divorces – only men had advantages. They made a way for children to abandon care for their aged parents. This was rampant among the rabbi's also.

Verse 25.

It is a blessing to bear the sign of God's covenant with man, but only if the terms of that covenant are strictly followed. If not, then the sign of that covenant is meaningless and without effect or benefit.

Verse 26.

Therefore, if the uncircumcised Gentile acts according to the spirit and design of God's law from what light God has afforded him, God will count him as if he was circumcised.

Verse 27.

Will not such a person be in a position to judge those who had the written public law as well as the circumcision that the law required, but broke that law?

Verse 28.

Neither the outward rite of circumcision, nor the outward profession of membership in the covenant makes that person a Jew or a genuine believer. Both are meant to represent the spiritual choices within the heart which must be seen in the deeds of that believer.



Verse 29.

The true Jew is so inwardly – circumcised in the heart, purified by the Spirit of God. This is beyond the letter of the law. Such a person seeks not the praise of men, but the praise of God, because he seeks to follow the faith of Abraham to the salvation of his soul.

Ancient Jewish writers and rabbi's all point to genuine faith, which is in the heart by the spirit. Also, the prophets that could not be pleased by only the performance of outward rites and professions.

The point here speaks of the working of the Holy Spirit, both among all people (the Gentiles) and among the Jews. God communicates His salvation, but not in any one, limited way, or to only one people. The Holy Spirit speaks through God's word, but is not limited to that. The work in the heart comes from the same Spirit. God's judgment is according to each individuals' choice to follow, abuse, or neglect this word – whether written in the heart, or on the tables of stone.

All people are of the same importance to God. He is no respecter of persons. God's Word was given to one people, with the responsibility that they would spread it to others. That responsibility was given to the Church and requires that the Bible and its message of salvation and blessing from God be sent throughout the world. The Gentiles then have the opportunity of learning from the written Word, what the Spirit of God had before written on their hearts.

Next, Paul expounds on the corrupt state of all mankind.

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