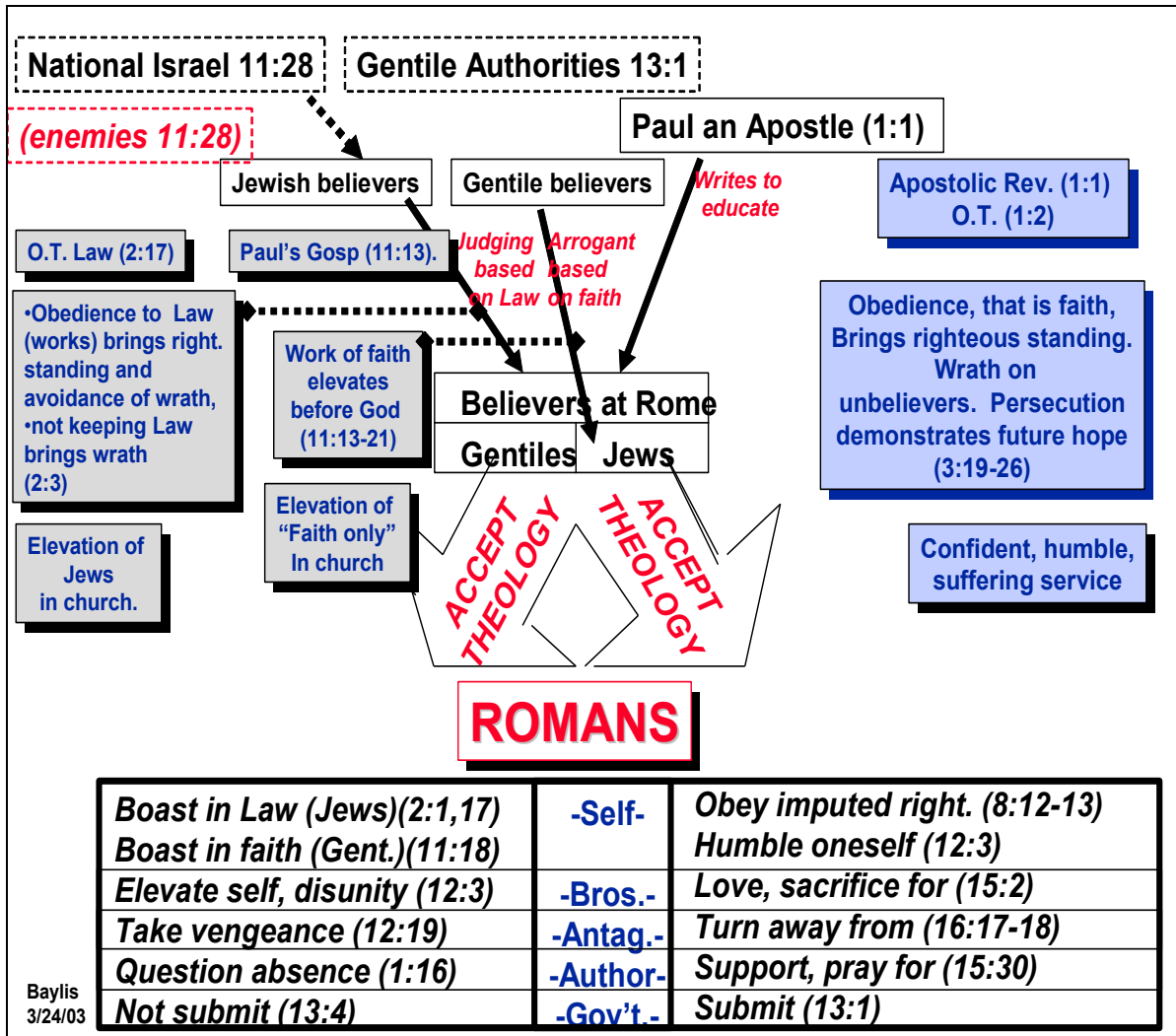


ROMANS



INTRODUCTION

Definitions: Basis of Paul's Thought

It is very important to notice several things that are at the heart of Paul's argument (which are the same at the heart of any argument in the Bible, not any different than that preached by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount).

The Heart or the Character

The heart of man, his character, is the concern of Paul, as it was of the Law (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). The heart is the core of the man. It is his attributes, his character. James deals with this when he says that bitter water cannot come out of a fountain that has sweet water in it (James 3:11, mouth reflects heart). Thus when bitter statements come out of the believer, it demonstrates that he/she has not changed their character from that of self-righteous to that of receiving Christ's character through imputation and revelation. The character of Adam is what is in all mankind. That character (heart) was shown to be evil continually (i.e., it thought of nothing but justifying self before others and God.) Yet the Law showed that man could not be righteous, since not only did he not keep the Law, but also his character reinterpreted the Law to justify himself. Note this well: The Adamic heart can do no good, not even one thing. It is Satan's character, and as such, can do no good . . . only evil.

That is why Paul deals with the heritage of the Gentiles in chapter 1 and then the heritage of the Jews in chapter 2. The Gentiles do things that are so contrary to God they are evident by what is *seen*. Yet in 1:32, he points out that they not only do these things but give hearty approval, meaning they say they are "good." Then the Jew claims to be righteous because of their relationship to the Law, and not by keeping it, i.e., their righteousness is due to their being children of Abraham. Thus they do evil (don't keep the Law), but claim to be "good" (i.e., righteous) by their heritage, which again shows how depraved their mind is. It cannot identify good and evil when it is clear.

By doing this Paul shows that the heritage that one comes from (i.e., he inherits it) is totally wicked and depraved (i.e., from Adam). In other words the very place that one derives their body and mind is depraved, and thus one cannot be righteous by their heritage (i.e., their person, their character, their heart, is evil). Thus, the Gentiles are evil, and the nation Israel is evil as well. Paul points out that if a Jew wanted to argue that Israel was righteous because of their relationship to the Law (i.e., to Abraham) their argument is self-condemning. The very fact that they argue that they are righteous through heritage but don't keep the Law, shows the depravity of their mind, since if they were truly righteous by inheritance, then that righteous character *would* keep the Law naturally.

So the heart must be changed. But the Law can not change it, since the Law only identified the heart for what it was. One needs a new character, a new heart, a new

motivation. Thus, the old one is judicially killed at the cross/resurrection (forgiveness of sins for the first character). Then the person (now having lost the identity of guilt for his sins) can be judicially related to the new character, that of Christ which is imputed into him by the act of believing.

That character glorifies God, since God gives him his righteous character and now he has none of His own. By seeing Christ as his example, and means of righteousness, he notes that Christ went to death and forsook His right to self-glorification on earth (though He deserved it) for the glory of God (and thus others). This is the nature of what is to be followed: the revelation of Christ.

First, He gives righteousness to the believer. Then he forsakes self-glorification of any self-glorifying deeds, but only seeks to glorify God in the heart change. Thus one now believes in Christ to fulfill any righteous requirements of any Law, and then only performs deeds because of an inner desire to glorify God and thus bless others with God's message of mercy. Thus one is sacrificial to please God, not himself. One seeks the praise of God, not his peers. One works in secret, not in public. One continues to take abuse for the sake of imitating His Lord since persecution by the unrighteous of the righteous brings forth hope (for the future rectification of all things.)

One's character cannot be hidden, since it is his/her character. He cannot glorify God selflessly if he does not perceive God as selfless in Christ, and identify that characteristic as his new nature. One who is selfless cannot glorify himself in his deeds since he recognizes that this does not please God, nor His character. One cannot act apart from one's character. There are no slips in character. It has to act, as it is.

Thus, one's character in Adam must die. The character of Christ must live in the believer. This is imputed through the Spirit (revelation of Christ), and now one serves on the basis of Christ's love. Thus, anything self-glorifying, self-earned, self-generated, is evil, is judged dead, and is not only worthless, it is an exhibition of the character of Satan which opposes God and His Son. One may only do deeds freely because God has totally enabled this one to act on God's behalf and act mercifully.

Now one thing must be said about the character. One's character is their heart's desires. God's character is His heart's desires. The Adamic character loves to glorify self. God's character is made up of self-sacrificing mercy that gives to others. When one appropriates God's character, they may still act like they do with their own selfish character, automatically doing what it desires. Thus when one acts for God, he does not count what he does as meritorious (e.g., proving himself as righteous), and then glorify his accomplishments, because he is only doing what that character does automatically.

One's selfish character might have a desire to watch immoral movies. So they go to immoral movies and enjoy them. They do not come home and say to their neighbors, "Look, my character is immoral. You can tell because I've seen two immoral movies today." The person doesn't care what people think, or he doesn't count the movies. He

does what he does because it is what he is. He likes it. It isn't an effort. He doesn't feel that it is something he sacrifices to do. It is what he likes.

The same is with God's character in man. It does what God likes us to do because it is who we are. Thus one doesn't have to go about counting up good deeds and prove anything to anyone about this character. He doesn't need an award, or to go on stage and get praised for going to the orphanage. It is what he likes to do. He does it because it is who he is. He goes home and is excited because he got to do what he likes.

The Sin

(Refer to the Section on “The Sin” in Romans)

Sin is a very interesting term in Romans. Of the 48 times sin is used in the noun form, it is singular 45 times. The article precedes the singular 30 out of those 45 times.¹ Yet a random search of other Pauline epistles reveals the opposite (In 1 Corinthians “sin” is mentioned only once in the articular singular; in Galatians none are articular singular; in Hebrews there are only three occurrences of the articular singular and 2 Corinthians has no articular singular out of two singular). In fact, of the 42 verses containing articular singular “sin” in the New Testament, 30 of those verses occur in Romans, and all those 30 verses occur between Romans 5:12 and 8:3. In other words, more than two out of every three occurrences of this construction occur in roughly 3 chapters of the New Testament. Thus it might be proposed that the articular singular of “sin” has some significance unique to the argument of Romans particularly to the argument that is developed in the sanctification chapters of 5:12—8:3.

The first use of “the sin” in Romans 5:12 ultimately is identified as the sin of Adam. As seen in chapter 5, the sin of Adam was the opposite of the single obedient act of Christ. Adam’s attempt was one of self-glorification (tempted by Satan). However when God came on the scene and attempted to question his deeds (i.e., the Law, the desires of God), Adam covered himself based on his depraved mind’s reasoning (“I was afraid and naked so I hid”). Thus when the Law confronts man he reasons to justify himself. Thus Adam is identified as having taken self-glorification actions and then defending them as adequate.

Thus, “the sin” that the Book of Romans is focusing on is the sin of self-justification (or self-righteousness). The Law confronted man with his character, and instead of seeing it as wanting, he perceived himself as justified.² “The Sin,” then is identified by the Law as the sin of the character of the heart . . . coveting. It can do no other. Thus, when “The Sin” is mentioned it means that one is trying to extend the duties of “the Adamic heart.”

¹ The use of the articular singular “sin” occurs only 42 times in 36 verses in the New Testament, 30 of the 42 usages are in Romans, 24 of the 36 verses are in Romans. The verses are as follows: Jn. 1:29, 8:21, 8:34, 9:41, 15:22, Acts 7:60, Rom. 5:12, 5:20, 5:21, 6:1, 6:2, 6:6, 6:7, 6:10, 6:11, 6:12, 6:13, 6:17, 6:18, 6:20, 6:22, 6:23, 7:7, 7:8, 7:9, 7:13, 7:14, 7:23, 8:2, 8:3, 1 Co. 15:56, Heb. 3:13, Heb. 9:26, Heb. 12:4, 1 Jn. 3:4, 1 Jn. 3:8

² The typical way that sin is identified here is usually the vile sins, adultery, lust, cheating, etc. However, while those are certainly included in man’s failure, the focus here is on man’s depraved mind which justifies itself, no matter what sin he does. He is unable to identify his character.

The Spirit (or “led by the Spirit”; 8:14)

It is to be noted very specifically that there are two problems established in Romans 1—3. The first is that man does not keep the revelation he was given (general revelation in chapter 1 and the Law in chapter 2). However, there is a second problem and that is the depraved mind. Man shows he has an evil character (depraved mind) by the fact that when he goes against the obvious points of the revelation he does not stand condemned by his own evaluation, but actually calls his evil deeds good. Thus in 1:32, he not only does these evil deeds but approves those who do them.³

Now in chapter 3, Paul establishes that Christ has died for the evil deeds. However, man’s mind is still depraved and does not perceive his need of forgiveness since he approves his own sin. Thus, God must open up the depraved mind to see the need of forgiveness and the imputed righteousness offered through the sacrifice of Christ. This is the function of the Holy Spirit; to allow the depraved mind to see the need for imputed righteousness and the uselessness of one’s own works.

In short, the function of the Holy Spirit is to open man’s mind up to perceive the truth of the apostle’s revelation. Note clearly that the Spirit works through the Apostolic Revelation.

An Apostle

The function of the apostle is to eyewitness the words and works of Jesus Christ, particularly the crucifixion and resurrection, and match them to the expectation of the Old Testament as proof of Jesus as the Christ (John 20:31).

Righteousness

Righteousness is the character of God. Thus God reveals His righteousness in the Old Testament by revealing His character. Jesus then is the fulfillment of His character and thus is fully righteous. There are two kinds of righteousness proposed.

- Earned righteousness or righteousness through the Law. There is a self-attempt to please God in the Old Testament through the keeping of the Law. The Law was for sanctification, that is, how to walk daily and represent God. Earned righteousness was always short of the glory of God (3:23).
- Imputed righteousness through the sacrifice of Christ. This is the opposite of earned righteousness as it is the righteousness possessed by the character of Christ

³ **Romans 1:32** “and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

and is fully relational with God as He is the same character. This righteousness is imputed (or accounted) and thus justifies man who believes.

Style: The Nature of Polemic in Romans

The major issue in the Book of Romans is a disagreement regarding theology. The theology of the Jewish believers was one of obedience to the Law for holiness. Paul's theology of the gospel was one of faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The nature of polemic is to take an antagonist's belief system and attack it. Not infrequently, one of the ways of doing this is to use the antagonist's words, and either agree with him on the words, but actually show the true requirement (e.g., 1 John 2:3-4, "Keep the commands"), or to reuse the words and reframe their definition. Thus, the Jewish believers would be claiming that *obedience* was the keeping of the laws, which were clearly required for *deliverance*. Thus *obedience* and *deliverance* (from wrath) were some of the key words that the Jewish believers felt were a clear instruction of the Old Testament, and in essence, require Paul to defend his dismissal of those requirements.

So in the nature of polemic, Paul answers them using *their* terms, yet shows how those terms are used in the new age as the fullness of the Old Testament requirement but now in Christ. Thus he says obedience is still required, but now since Christ is the obedient One, the believer must have faith in Him (participate with Him in His death and life). Thus the obedience is now not works of the Law, but faith in the One who performed the works of the Law perfectly (since man failed and was condemned). Thus he refers to the *obedience of faith*.

Not only does Paul agree that obedience is necessary, but he also believes that deliverance from wrath is important. However, what Paul points out is not that it is through the symbolic propitiatory sacrifice of the Law, but the real, full, propitiatory sacrifice in Christ. Thus *deliverance from wrath* is important, but sacrifices will no longer perform that function, and now must be fulfilled under Christ. The result of this is that those who cry out *deliverance from wrath through the Law* are actually the ones who are not delivered from the wrath since they do not have the full propitiatory sacrifice.

Probably the most intense section of Paul's use of their terms to realign their thinking is in chapters 5:12—8:39. Since this is the crux of the issue (sanctification), this is where the reuse of terms will be found.

Now, a warning must be issued. When one uses a polemic, it is somewhat akin to our present use of sarcasm. When one is sarcastic (mimicking terms), it is possible that the reader does not discern that mimicking and might in fact understand the passage in exactly the wrong way, thinking that the author is agreeing with the antagonist by using their terms. An example of this is the statement by John that believers know they know

God by the ‘keeping of the commandments’ (1 John 2). If the reader looks at that verse alone, they might believe that John was stating that believers can be identified by the keeping of the 10 commandments. However, a look at the context indicates that John is speaking of ‘keeping the commandments’ which are fulfilled in Jesus and now have become ‘believing in the Lord Jesus Christ’ and ‘loving your brother’ (1John 3:23). So why has John used the phrase ‘the commandments’ when it might be confused with the 10 commandments? The reason is that the antagonist is claiming to be in a relationship with God through the ‘keeping of commandments’ (the O.T. commandments), and John is agreeing with Him, but he is proving that those commandments have been completed in the Son, Jesus Christ, and now the commandments that are to be kept are belief in Him. This is the nature of polemic. It is taking of the words and phrases of the antagonist and turning them back on them by explaining the true use of the words or phrases.

So Paul is doing this. The Jewish believers are saying, “Obedience” is required. Paul is saying “Yes it is!”. However, it is obedience in believing that Jesus is the Savior, not obedience to the works of the Law.

Now notice that if the interpreter holds that Paul’s use of terms (like obedience) in Romans 6—8 indicates that man should work for his sanctification, he actually ends up agreeing with the antagonist, that works are necessary for sanctification. Thus, the only way that one can avoid missing the nature of the polemic (and getting the opposite interpretation) is to understand a consistent argument. The reader must understand the whole book, and the problem and solution and the movement of the context. Any use of verses or chapters by themselves may end up with errant conclusions.

Some terms that Paul uses that the antagonist is using in an opposite application are as follows.

| Term(s) | Paul’s Intended Meaning | Jewish Meaning |
|----------------|---|--|
| “obedience” | “obedience of (that is) faith” | Obedience to the works of the Law |
| “continue” | (do not) “continue with respect to the sin” | continue in the Law |
| “ashamed” | (Paul is) “ashamed” of his gospel of no works (1:16) | (antagonist should be) “ashamed of their self-works” (6:21) |
| The Sin | Self-righteousness, self-justification, rejection of the provision of imputed righteousness | Not keeping the Law, or rejection of the Law (like Paul is accused). |
| Deliverance | Placed in a righteous relationship with God | Not subject to physical oppression and hard times |

- Sin:** Man as representative was always to glorify his Creator and Sovereign instead of himself. Man took the Law to be a restriction of God on man (harsh) and glorified himself by the performance of deeds. Yet even in the performance of deeds man always came short. Thus man always came short of the glory of God in deeds and in his recognition of God as the object of glory. This is clear in the argument of Romans 1--3 (practice and ability to judge oneself, since the Law only condemned). Also see 4:4. Sin needs to be seen as an attempt to please God in self-effort. The Law showed how one could glorify God, yet man could not do it totally and always came short (3:23, cf. Also 7:9ff.)
- Righteousness:** Two parts: First God's character is righteousness. Thus God is right in His dealings with man (cf. 3:5) and two; *that* righteousness is given to man, since man is unrighteous. Thus righteousness in Romans is always imputed righteousness by faith (never by works, see 3:21-26). It is the opposite of sin imputed in Adam.
- Death/Life:** Death is the judgment for sin. It was the just results of Adam's sin (self-glorification), and thus is physical death and the accompanying lack of ability to represent God. Life is brought forth only by Jesus (physical life in the future that represents Him). The way man represents Him presently is by accepting His promise of future life through the atonement. One is to act based on the future and on the delay.
- Flesh:** It is the evil Adamic character with all its self-justifying nature. The self-glorifying understanding of self-works under the Law. The flesh could not do the works of the Law so changed the understanding so it glorified oneself.
- Obedience:** Responding on the basis of the revelation.
- Obedience of faith:** Responding to revelation that requires belief so that righteousness might be imputed.
- Faith:** Believing a promise (revelation) of God.
- Justification:** A judicial term meaning that one is legally declared righteous before God, either on the basis of works (which is impossible) or on the basis of imputation of Christ's works. This may be regarding initial salvation or sanctification or both. For instance one might be a son based on birth status, yet the relationship would be practically defined by his behavior.

Argument of the Book

Main Problem (Why?)

Paul is being accused of avoiding a visit to the Roman church because he does not want to defend his gospel (theology), which has eliminated the requirement of keeping the Law.

The Roman Jews accusations were based on their errant belief that:

- Gentile believers would be under a curse because they did not keep the Law
- Jewish believers, if they did not keep the Law (rejecting the works of the Law for effective righteousness) when they came to Christ would come under the wrath of God.
- National Israel, who are the people of God, would effectively be sent to hell since they rely on the Law and if the Law is of no value for righteousness then they are cursed forever. This would be contrary to the Abrahamic Covenant which insured Israel's place in the kingdom.
- The Abrahamic Covenant established that Israel would enter the Kingdom. To eliminate Israel from that promise is false teaching. Thus Paul is a false teacher.

Paul had not visited the Romans, and there was an accusation being presented that Paul was ashamed of his gospel (1:10-16; 15:22-25).⁴ The content of this gospel was imputed righteousness through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ (3:24).⁵ This necessitated the removal of the judgment of the Law from those who had righteousness

⁴ 1:10 " . . . if perhaps now at last . . . I may succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you . . . 13 And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented thus far) . . . 15 Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel . . . "

15:22 "For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you; 23 but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you 24 whenever I go to Spain-- for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while-- 25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints."

⁵ 3:24 "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;"

by faith (7:6).⁶ Paul's revelation had also opened the door to Gentiles as joint heirs to the promises (11:11).⁷ The Jewish believers objected to Paul's revelation, holding that the Law, given to Moses was to be kept (2:17-20),⁸ and disobedience to it qualified one for wrath (2:1).⁹ Gentiles therefore would be under the wrath since they do not keep the Law. Paul's avoidance of the Romans was therefore taken as reluctance, and thus inability to defend his gospel (cf. 1:1-16, 15:14-33). Thus, Paul's epistle is to defend against the charge that he was not coming to them since he was ashamed of his gospel.

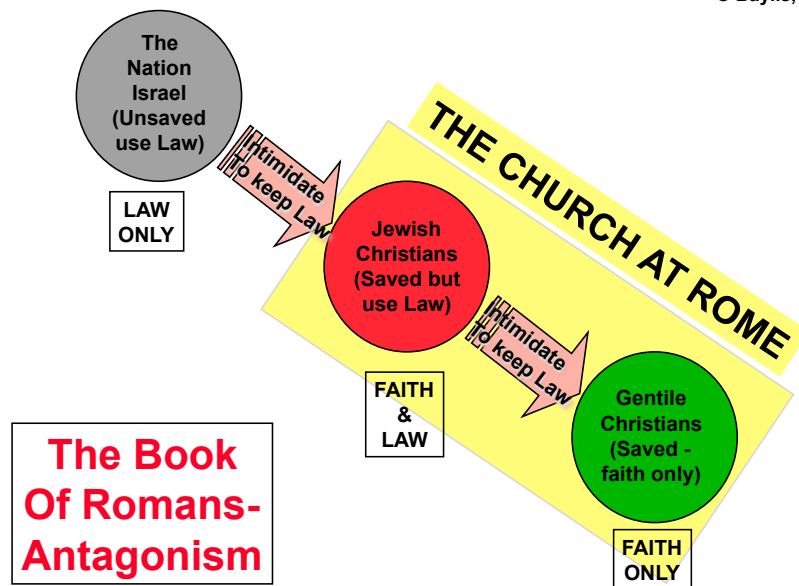
However, it is very important to note that the antagonist Jewish believers within the church are not the only antagonist. The nation Israel, unsaved, is persecuting their Messianic brothers in the church, telling them that if they reject the Law they will be under the wrath of God for disobedience. Thus these Jewish believers are trying to appease Israel by adding the Law (or keeping it intact) in their Christian life. Thus their insistence on Gentiles keeping the Law is a result of that.

⁶ 7:6 "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."

⁷ 11:11 "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous."

⁸ 2:17 "But if you bear the name "Jew," and rely upon the Law, and boast in God, 18 and know *His* will, and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, 19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,"

⁹ 2:1 "Therefore you are without excuse, every man *of you* who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things."



Goal

- To explain the reason he did not come to them. It was that he, as the apostle to the Gentiles, was busy spreading the gospel to those who had not heard, and the Romans already had the Gospel.
- To explain that his gospel was based on the revelation of the Old Testament fulfilled in Christ and thus the Law had served its purpose as pointing to Christ. Thus to keep the Law to obtain righteousness was to sin since it glorified oneself instead of God.

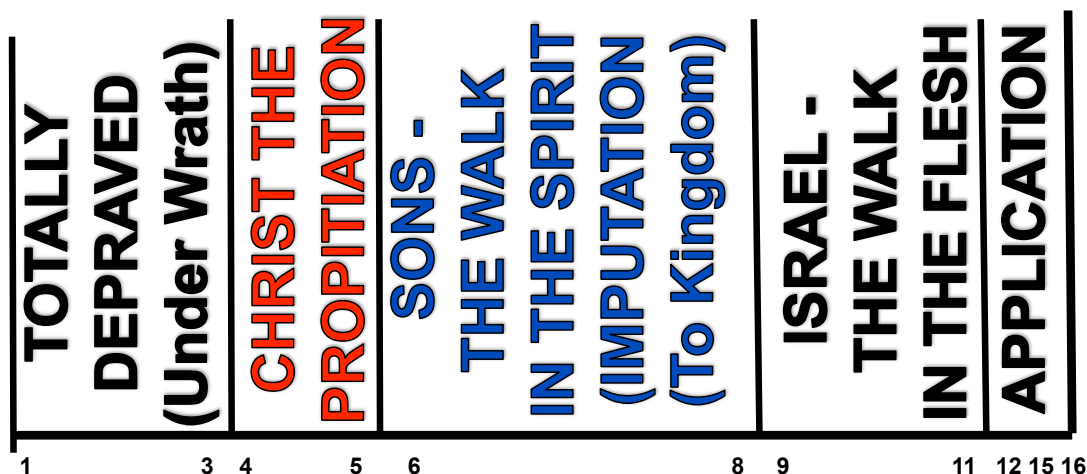
Main Issue: Paul's absence from them seems to be a proof that he is ashamed to come and defend it in the face of dissension.

In order to defend himself against attacks that he is unwilling to defend his gospel and thus will not come to them, Paul will re-explain his gospel theology. The major objections to his gospel are that he eliminates the law in order to include Gentiles as equal partners with Jews. Since the objection is that he cannot throw out the Law without incurring the wrath of God, Gentiles cannot be equal, since they do not keep the Law. The major correction seems to be against the Jews who wanted to bring the Law into the gospel. The Gentiles generally agreed with Paul (since they did not have to reject the Law like Jews) that faith was the only thing required. However, they looked on the Jews as inferior since they had a difficulty accepting "faith only." In addition, the nation of Israel had rejected Christ and intended to find their righteousness in the Law, and thus the Gentile believers were arrogant against Israel (and the Jewish believers) based on their perceived superior ability to understand the concept of "faith only."

Romans

Problem: Accusation – Paul Removing Law for Right Standing with God

Solution: THE STORY OF GOD: Law was to reveal man's evil character so Glory would come to God through Christ



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Thus Paul will begin by introducing himself as an apostle, who is under obligation to spread this gospel to the Gentiles, and so, since they already have the gospel, he has more important items to attend to. Following that, he will defend the removal of the Law by

- 1—3a** Showing that all men (both Jew and Gentile) are condemned, both by physical rebellion (works or deeds) against God and by purposefully misinterpreting the revelation to justify their actions (understanding) (1--3a). Since man is hopelessly depraved both mentally and physically, God must impute His righteousness and affect his mind to understand it,
- 3b—4** since man must have his mind overridden, since his reasoning always glorifies himself, and imputed righteousness must glorify God (3b--4)
- 5** This imputed righteousness will, since it is a real propitiatory sacrifice (unlike the Law with its sacrifice) appease the wrath of God (5a)
- 6--7** Therefore man should now walk on the basis of imputed righteousness (grace, judicial freedom) as opposed to attempting to please God with self-righteous activities, which are of no validity and in fact cannot please God (6--7)
- 8a** This imputed righteousness is revealed by the Holy Spirit to man through the apostles (in this case Paul), since his own mind will reason to self-glorification (the flesh) (8a)

- 8b** This revelation, accepted by faith, is the basis for endurance of the believer until the ultimate revelation of his deliverance (8b)
- 9--11** Israel, whose basis for righteousness is the Law, has been set aside, but God is righteous toward His promise to Abraham and they will ultimately leave their works for imputed righteousness (9--11)
- 12--16** Based on the elimination of the Law, the believer's duties now are to sacrifice himself (dead judicially) as a living sacrifice to God. Thus he will (on the basis of the grace given to him) love his brother, serve the body, submit to the Gentile authorities, aid his Jewish brother's weak faith, include Gentiles into the body equally, support Paul, and welcome Paul's associates (12-16)