

The Questions of Romans

Do Not Draw these 9 Conclusions Regarding The Gospel of God

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Introduction

Paul uses many questions in his letter to the Romans. These fall into two categories.

One group are those by which he takes the reader from the current concept to the next. An example is the first question, found in Romans 2:3, 4. After describing the unrighteousness of one group of mankind, to lead into his next point, he asks, "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? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

The other way in which he uses questions is in confronting a reader who may be drawing a wrong conclusion from what he has just stated. It is as if he says, "So you think I'm headed down that road? No way! This is my destination...." Those who speak the truth for God have often been judged as saying something they never said, solely because the hearer drew invalid, unsanctified conclusions from the statements of fact. Peter acknowledged this was happening to Paul's writings. (2 Peter 3:16; cf. John 2:19-21; Matt. 26:61.) Sometimes when Paul addresses the problem, he implies the wrong conclusion by the question he raises, and sometimes he states it explicitly within the question.

I will examine nine questions of this nature in the first eight chapters, as a method of following Paul's description of the gospel. But first, let us preview these chapters. He paints in the first two chapters a picture of the gospel. Then he clarifies five important points in chapter three by using the method of raising such questions, and giving the answers. The fifth question concerns the central issue in this study, and possibly in Paul's handling of the gospel throughout his writings (particularly in Galatians). At this point in the sequence of Paul's letter, we will step aside to consider two other parallel historical events. It was in studying one of these that I felt led to take this look at Paul's questions. In chapters four and five he develops further vital concepts of the gospel. He next asks and answers four more questions (two in chapter six and two in seven). Finally in chapter eight he gives us a picture of the fruits of this gospel, through the suffering of this world to the redemption at the end, closing with a focus on the dynamic behind it all. (There are four more of these questions in chapters nine to eleven which we will not handle here.) Before looking at the questions, we must build a brief picture of the gospel Paul gives in the first two chapters.

To do that, we need to understand another method Paul used frequently, and that is his illustration by contrast. For example, throughout his writings he contrasts faith with unbelief, faith with works, righteousness with unrighteousness, grace with law, spirit with flesh, etc. Again, sometimes the contrasting concept is implied, and sometimes it is explicit. In the tables used throughout this study, when the concept is implied, it appears in brackets. I have done my best to remain true to what I see as Paul's views in supplying these implied items.

The Gospel

The gospel, unto which Paul was separated (1:1), in which he served (1:9), which he was ever ready to preach (1:15), and of which he was not ashamed (1:16), is his focus in this letter. He shows the gospel as dealing with all of the contrasting concepts which sin introduced into the universe. Here is how this gospel's introduction can be outlined. (Throughout this study, I will use this double table with references along the outside.)

Faith and Righteousness		Unbelief and Unrighteousness	
1:16	It is the power of God unto salvation by faith	[It is also the power of God unto destruction by unbelief]	
1:17	In it the righteousness of God is revealed	[In it] the wrath of God is revealed	1:18
	from [God's] faith to [man's] faith [who hold the truth in righteousness]	against unrighteousness of men [by unbelief] who hold the truth in unrighteousness	
2:7	Examples: • Well doing	Examples: • Know unrighteousness leads to death, but do it and enjoy the unrighteous	1:32
		• Judge the unrighteous, but do unrighteousness	2:1
		• Do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, do evil, Jew and Gentile	2:7-9
		• Sinned without the law	2:12
		• Sinned in the law	2:12
2:14	• Gentiles who have not the law, but do the law	• Jew who know and teach righteousness, but do unrighteousness	2:17 ff
2:15	The law written in their hearts	[The law not written in their hearts]	
2:29	Circumcision of the heart, in the spirit	• Circumcision outward in the flesh [only]	2:28

In summary, the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of man, revealed in His faith, His righteousness, seen most clearly where righteousness and wrath met and kissed, the cross of Calvary. This power accomplishes complete salvation in all who respond to God's faith with faith, those whose hearts melt in love when faced with the revelation of God's love, even when that revelation comes only through nature. This power is what makes the difference between unrighteousness and righteousness. The law itself cannot do it, for one can sin with the law as well as without the law.

First Erroneous Conclusion

In looking at this description of the gospel, and who will be saved, as Paul said, "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (2:16), one easily sees how he stated the possibility of Gentiles being in the righteous group, and Jews in the unrighteous. This could lead to the first wrong conclusion, which the question in 3:1 implies, that **there is no advantage to being a circumcised Jew**. He asks,

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

His answer to this implied wrong conclusion takes the focus off the human and puts it on God. As he develops later in chapters nine to eleven, God desired to make the descendants of Abraham an illustration for the entire earth, and therein were tremendous blessings, as Paul said, "much every way". The most valuable of these were "the oracles of God". Why were these the primary advantage and profit the Jew had? Paul later gives the answer, "Faith is by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (10:17). The faith that is the bedrock of the gospel, the faith of God, is but dimly seen without the written oracles. From these sacred pages blazes forth the truth of His character, which is the solution for sin. Recall that the righteousness of God is "revealed from faith to faith".

So we have the first detour blocked:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
Those who have the law in the heart (faith) and thereby do righteousness will be saved.	There is no advantage to being a Jew.	The written word of God, given to the Jews, is the most powerful agent to build faith.

But what then would cause a Jew, who had this amazing revelation of God, to fail to fulfill God's purpose in the gospel, that is, living righteously by faith? How could one, while knowing the light of God's purpose in creation, the origin of sin, and God's plan of salvation—even teaching these to others—how could such a one live unrighteously? Paul gives his answer in passing to the next question. If righteousness is by faith, then unrighteousness must be by "unfaith", or as we say, unbelief. They did not believe. The knowledge they had stayed in their heads and did not make it to their hearts.

	[Some did believe]	Some did not believe	3:3
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Second Erroneous Conclusion

One could easily conclude, in looking at the failure of the Jews, that God's name had been irretrievably blackened. Paul earlier stated, "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" Jews. (2:24). Thus one could be led to think that **the faith of God was powerless and ineffective against such unbelief** (3:3). He asks,

Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Paul responds with the first of his ten, powerful negative affirmations used in this epistle, "God forbid!", or as it can be translated, "Certainly not!", literally, "Let it not be!" Quoting from the oracles of God, he makes the following points. God would be true even if every human being were a liar. God would be faithful even if every human proved faithless. The choice of any or all of God's creatures to reject His character would not alter His changeless nature of agape. God's outpouring of Himself in redemptive love cannot be judged in the least to be without effect, *even in the face of unbelief*. For God's faith still benefits the unbeliever in ways short of eternal salvation. In fact it was unbelief that called forth the outpouring of God's faith and love. He knew that the only way to overcome evil was with good. This truth will be fully known at the judgment, and it will overwhelmingly win the verdict of acquittal for God regarding the charges brought against Him by all the powers of wickedness.

God never intended for His faith and love to force salvation from sin, so the choice of some humans to turn even from the ultimate revelation of God on the cross cannot be judged as a

failure of that faith and love to accomplish what it intended, to draw all to Him. All will one day confess that gently drawing power. The unrepentant sinner will, alas, also have to confess his unrelenting resistance against it.

So Paul put his stop sign at the next false turn:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
Unbelief leads to unrighteousness, even in those who have the law which reveals God's faith and righteousness.	Man's unbelief makes the faith of God ineffective.	God's truth and faith are effective against sin, not lessened by unbelief, in fact, stimulated by the needs of unbelief and sin.

When God created man perfect, in His image, the character that was being developed in humans reflected the very character of God. This was God's intent. However, when one contemplates what God has done to meet the needs of the universe in response to sin, it becomes clear that this rebellion has resulted in revelations of God that otherwise would not have been seen. Without sin there would have been no cross, though God would not have been any less full of faith and love. It was the dark backdrop of evil that highlighted, or as Paul says "commends" or "demonstrates" the brilliance of the righteousness of God (3:5).

	[Our righteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God]	Our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God	3:5
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Third Erroneous Conclusion

But this realization, that both righteousness and unrighteousness in His creatures but demonstrate further His character of agape, Paul realized could lead some to think, **God should not punish unrighteousness if it by contrast accentuates His goodness** (3:5). He asks,

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, ... is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?

Again, he says, "Certainly not!" He summarily rejects such a conclusion by another question that reminds one of his statement in 2:16. "Then how shall God judge the world?" For "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Paul's understanding of how God was solving the sin problem had no room for this gaping hole in the fabric of the gospel.

Paul restates the error in the first person singular, taking this falsehood into his own bosom in order to reject it. "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" (3:7). Again, one must see what is behind these statements to grasp the foundation understandings which alone will shine a light on all such wrong conclusions. Paul's declaration of his commitment to know nothing but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2) takes us back to the cross as the clearest revelation of the good news.

The cross was the place above all others where the sins of all caused the righteousness of God to be glorified. (See John 12:23.) Truly at the cross "the truth of God ... more abounded" through the untruthfulness of mankind "unto His glory". But rather than such an event excusing sin, it forever sealed sin's doom. Rather than the cross commending the sinner as agent of glorifying God, it condemned him, showing the death that sin brings. And

rather than removing the right of God to judge sinners, it affirmed His righteousness in placing the "guilty" verdict on all rebels. (See John 12:31.) For Christ there had been made sin for the entire world, and the sentence executed against sin in the body of Christ. (2 Cor. 5:21, 14). This is the most powerful evidence of the right of God to judge all men.

This was always the background for Paul when he shared with others the "judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). Thus he could correct this third error:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
Sin has led to a revelation of God's glory that was never seen before.	God is unrighteous to condemn sin if it results in His glory.	The cross, putting together sin and the person of God, glorified God and affirmed Him as judge, as there He condemned sin by demonstrating His wrath against it.

Paul here most plainly states that others had been slandering him by reporting and affirming that he taught this erroneous conclusion, "Let us do evil, that good may come." (3:8) But the gospel he preached had no place for it, though his gospel did condemn slanderers! And he let the gospel judge his opponents.

Fourth Erroneous Conclusion

Paul then turns back to address an issue arising from the first two correcting truths. He had affirmed the advantage of being a Jew because of the oracles of God, but had also shown how some did not believe those oracles. Since he stated that their unbelief did not render God's faith powerless, he realized that some may then conclude that with their advantages **the Jews were better than anyone else** (3:9). He asks,

Are we better?

His answer is, "No, in no wise." He proceeds with an indictment of the entire human race on charges of sin. He quotes extensively from the oracles (the law) to prove "that they all are under sin" (3:9), that "under the law ... all the world" is "guilty before God" (3:19). He strongly repudiated the fourth error, that of superiority:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
The Jews have the oracles of God, and their unbelief has not caused God's faith to be ineffective.	The Jews are better.	The law, rather than making the Jew better, condemns all mankind universally as sinners.

Paul uses this universal truth to develop the relationship between law and grace, and works and faith, relationships which are true for Jew and Gentile alike. Note the stated and implied correlated concepts, both of which are true at the same time. (Some of the implied parallels are drawn from later in the epistle.)

	[Under grace, not all the world is guilty]	Under the law, all the world guilty	3:19
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3:23, 24	All ... being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus	All have sinned [past tense] and come short [present tense] of the glory of God [by debt to God's law through the enslavement that came through Adam]	3:23
3:28	Justified by faith without the deeds of the law	By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified	3:20

The universal need as shown in the second column was met by God's universal solution as outlined in the first. Sin makes it impossible for the law to justify anyone. Since all have sinned, the law can only let that be known. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (3:20). When the law points out sin, it also condemns, and that is the opposite of justification.

Since it is thus impossible for sinners to attain to righteousness through the law, God provided another way, of which the oracles (law and prophets) witnessed (3:21). God Himself came in the likeness of our sinful flesh, lived a life of faith which conquered our sin, died the death of our sin, and then was raised to conquer our death. In this He was "a propitiation" "set forth" by God (3:25). John states that this was "for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Thus God revealed (manifested, 3:21) and declared (3:25) "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus" (3:22), "for the remission of sins" (3:25). His goal in this was to engender faith in sinners (Jew and Gentile alike—no difference; 3:22, 29, 30), so they would grasp what He had done for the human race and identify with it, thus living their identity in Christ (3:22, 25).

Paul wraps up his answer to the question with a strong conclusion. Based on how God removes sin and brings righteousness, no individual or group have any grounds to boast (3:27) that they are better (3:9).

3:27	Boasting is excluded by the law of faith.	Boasting is not excluded by the law of works.	3:27
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Fifth Erroneous Conclusion

Paul has stated that "the righteousness of God [comes] without [or not by] the law" (3:21), but [with or] "by the faith of Jesus" (3:22). Through the law, and in Christ, this righteousness was:

- manifested (3:21)
- set forth (3:25)
- declared (3:25, 26).

This faith:

- excludes boasting (the law of works does not exclude boasting)
- is basis of justification (the deeds of law are not the basis).

Faith shows then that the law is voided for these functions. Since its sentence is "guilty" for every human, it cannot give grounds for boasting or justification. But Paul realized that his powerful exclusion of the law as the means by which righteousness is attained by sinners, would likely lead some to conclude that **the law was thus totally removed** (3:31). So he asks,

Do we then make void the law through faith?

He again uses the strong negative, "Certainly not!" Rather than faith voiding the law, it actually establishes the law. Recall that in its broadest sense the law was understood as the entire Old Testament describing God's intentions for the human race before and after sin,

and more succinctly the ten commandment law. Paul is saying that instead of faith being a new system of salvation that makes the law God gave empty and worth nothing any longer, faith is seen to be the method God had all along by which His purposes for sinners would be met, by which they could be saved from sin and restored to righteousness.

In order to understand the connection between the law and righteousness by faith, one must see another truth that Paul affirms in this chapter (and develops further in chapter seven).

	[By the law is the knowledge of righteousness.]	By the law is the knowledge of sin.	3:20
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The law clearly states what is sin, and conversely what is righteousness. But just because it defines what is wrong, doesn't mean it can produce what is right. In fact, though it points out sin, it also cannot be accused of producing sin. The law is simply God's written revelation of the way things are. In an ideal sense, it shows us how He made things to operate. In a negative, sinful setting it also lets us know the ways we and the creation about us are *not* made to function. Such an "Owner's Manual" is a very important thing to have, as sin erased our internal instructions.

There are two ways that the truth of righteousness by faith could *appear* to nullify the law. One is the way a sinner cannot become righteous, and the other is the only way he can reach this standard.

First, a sinner cannot become righteous by coming to the law and merely trying to keep it. Sin makes righteousness an impossibility in and of a sinner. He is incapable *in himself* to do what is right, even though he comes to know and delight in what the law describes of righteousness. Paul will later describes this at length in chapter seven. This truth, left by itself, would *appear* to teach that it is therefore totally impossible in any way to attain to the righteousness of the law. And such an impossibility would effectively remove the law as a standard.

Secondly, God's method for a sinner to attain justification is faith, and not the works of the law (3:20, 28). From faith to faith is the process God has established of sinners being restored to God's original purpose for them. Since faith is seen to be the "how" of salvation, and not law, a superficial conclusion could be that the law is then not needed, that it serves no purpose.

But Paul wants all to know clearly that the exclusion of law as a method of attaining righteousness does not mean the law has no reason for existence. Perhaps 3:20 is the clearest explanation as to the purpose of the law in the context of faith. While not providing the *means* to righteousness, it still gives the *knowledge* of sin. This is deeper than it initially appears, and can only be understood fully in light of the cross.

In essence Paul is saying that it is the law that enables us to understand what it was that caused the death of Christ. How could we grasp what sin was in the breadth God desired without His written code delineating it? The cross shows us the end of sin, its consequences and destiny. After contemplating the cross with faith, we can with great insight exclaim, "That is price of sin!" But we can't fully answer from the cross the question that inevitably follows, "What is it that is so awful as to result in such a death!?" We need the law for that. And as we see a revelation of God's faith, which the law (in its broadest definition) brings us, and faith awakens in our hearts, this faith does two things to establish the law.

First it serves as the divine, dynamic insight that enables us to see in the law the dimensions of what sin is, described for us in the Scriptures that span from creation to the cross. And secondly, this same living principle of faith remolds us from the inside out, back into the divine image which the law describes.

Let's summarize the relationship between law and righteousness by faith. The law witnesses to righteousness by faith (3:21), this faith of God (3:3) and of Jesus (3:22), and man's responding faith (3:25, 26). This dynamic faith, in producing righteousness, establishes the law (3:31). Before sin, the law naturally produced righteousness, because the law was built into man's nature; it was the way he was made. He was spiritual. Man could be righteous just living the way he was made to live. After sin's devastation, this description of how God made things to operate did not change. Sin changed man, and, with his being out of harmony with law, brought him under death, the consequence of sin. He thereby became powerless to obey, to be righteous, even in the face of the written code of how he was to live. This code only condemned him. He could not attain to righteousness by law. The only way now that he could become righteous was to believe God, when He told him He would recreate righteousness in him. Such a faith, being man's taking his heart focus off himself and returning it to God and His power, was God's ordained method of restoring the sinner to righteousness.

So Paul blocks the fifth dead-end road:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
The sinner is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.	The law is made void by faith.	Faith excludes the law as means to righteousness, but establishes it as a definition of sin, and writes it in our hearts as an internal expression of its righteousness.

Significant Other Times

This misunderstanding that faith undermines the law is particularly pervasive when the gospel is preached in settings where the law has been taught and received without faith. Apparently Paul met this false charge all the way through his ministry in dealing with his fellow Jews. Note the accusation at his final arrest in Jerusalem. "This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place" (Acts 21:28).

As an important interlude to Paul's epistle, let us briefly look at two other times when the teaching of righteousness only by faith was misinterpreted by those set to defend the law who did not understand faith's role.

Righteousness by Faith in Christ's Teaching

Christ came teaching the internal righteousness that comes by faith. Two instances in Christ's ministry illustrate the faith which is identified with and brings righteousness. And significantly both involved individuals judged by the supposed defenders of law as sinners outside the realm of God's favor. Christ not only commends both individuals, but contrasts them pointedly with the "defenders" of law.

The centurion in Matt. 8:5 showed classic signs of faith. In faith's response to knowing something of Christ's character and to Christ's coming to where he was, he did the

following: he came to Christ, he beseeched him about his need, he confessed his unworthiness, he declared his utter confidence in the power of Christ's word, and he explained how he understood the authority issue in the controversy between good and evil, and Christ's role in it. Christ immediately described this Gentile's faith as "great faith", and said it was greater than any He had found in Israel. We have no record of any other such commendation from Christ Himself!

The publican in Luke 18:10 also manifested true faith by responding to the Holy Spirit's prompting in three ways. He went up to the temple to pray, and with clear insight into his true condition before God, he humbled himself, and cast himself upon God's mercy. Christ plainly stated that this man experienced justification by faith, in contrast to the Pharisee, who in spite of his strict external law-keeping (which he was all too ready to enumerate) manifested a sad lack of faith, as seen in the following: he trusted *in himself* that he was righteous instead of trusting fully in God, he failed to show the slightest insight into his own sinfulness, and therefore he despised the publican because he felt no corporate identity with him as a sinner.

Those who lacked faith's insight misjudged Christ's focus as attacking the law, which they mistakenly saw as consisting mostly of external deeds. They felt Christ had pitted Himself against Moses, and they tried openly to have Christ contradict Moses (John 8:5). As Christ showed the true nature of the law, its principles, and how it fit in the plan of salvation, they resisted the light because it did not fit their preconceived and misconceived ideas. They thought He was undermining the law, while they were its defenders. He pointedly addressed these thoughts. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17).

The Lawgiver was rejected in part because, in teaching and living righteousness by faith, He was misjudged as being a law-breaker and teaching others to disregard it.

Righteousness by Faith in the SDA Church in 1886-1895

One of the reasons God raised up the Seventh-day Adventist church was to restore the law to its rightful place in Christianity and the world. This commission was very similar to that given the Jews. Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 describes an end-time people who "keep the commandments of God." The early Seventh-day Adventist believers took this duty seriously, and endeavored to preach and teach the law. They were successful in convincing many people regarding the eternal, binding nature of the law. However, they sadly repeated the history of the Jews. While understanding that the law was eternal and essential, they failed to see and thus experience the proper setting of law in how God restores righteousness through faith.

When God sent a message of righteousness by faith, like the Jews the early Seventh-day Adventists felt it was undermining the law. The story of the controversy over the law in Galatians illustrates this confusion. The debate over the law began before the Minneapolis meetings in 1888, and was evidenced in G. I. Butler's study *The Law in the Book of Galatians* (1886) and E. J. Waggoner's entitled *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* (1888).

In a message written while at Minneapolis, addressed to those in attendance, Ellen White acknowledged the precious light that had come through Waggoner, and described some of the unresolved issues surrounding the understanding of the law. She recalled a vision she had two years earlier while in Switzerland regarding the 1886 General Conference Session, where Butler's booklet had been distributed. The angel guide had said to her at that time:

"There is much light yet to shine forth from the law of God and the gospel of righteousness. This message, understood in its true character, and proclaimed in the Spirit, will lighten the earth with its glory. The great decisive question is to be brought before all nations, tongues, and peoples. The closing work of the third angel's message will be attended with a power that will send the rays of the Sun of Righteousness into all the highways and byways of life, and decisions will be made for God as supreme Governor; His law will be looked upon as the rule of His government." (1888 *Materials*, p. 166; emphasis supplied)

In summarizing her reflections on the Minneapolis experience, with the controversy over the law seen there, she wrote before the end of 1888 the following:

Holding up Christ as our only source of strength, presenting His matchless love in having the guilt of the sins of men charged to His account and His own righteousness imputed to man, in no case does away with the law or detracts from its dignity. Rather, it places it where the correct light shines upon and glorifies it. This is done only through the light reflected from the cross of Calvary. The law is complete and full in the great plan of salvation, only as it is presented in the light shining from the crucified and risen Saviour. This can be only spiritually discerned. It kindles in the heart of the beholder ardent faith, hope, and joy that Christ is his righteousness. This joy is only for those who love and keep the words of Jesus, which are the words of God.... What power must we have from God that icy hearts, having **only a legal religion**, should see the better things provided for them--Christ and His righteousness! (1888 *Materials*, pp. 228, 229; emphasis supplied)

In 1889 Ellen White perceived the spirit opposing the message of righteousness by faith as the same that opposed Christ's teaching, and on the same grounds:

Brethren, do not let any of you be thrown off the track. "Well," you say, "What does Brother Smith's piece in the Review mean?" He doesn't know what he is talking about; he sees trees as men walking. Everything depends upon our being obedient to God's commandments. Therefore he takes those that have been placed in false settings and he binds them in a bundle **as though we were discarding the claims of God's law, when it is no such thing. It is impossible for us to exalt the law of Jehovah unless we take hold of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.** (1888 *Materials*, p. 348; emphasis supplied; this entire sermon is very enlightening and is highly recommended reading; it was in reflecting on this sermon, entitled "Christ and the Law", that I was led to look at Rom. 3:31 in the light of the gospel.)

In February of 1890, at a training institute she gave this observation about the message of righteousness by faith:

And when you go from this place, Oh be so full of **the message** that it is like fire shut up in your bones, that you cannot hold your peace. It is true **men will say**, "You are too excited; **you are making too much of this matter, and you do not think enough of the law**; now, **you must think more of the law; don't be all the time reaching for this righteousness of Christ, but build up the law.**" Let the law take care of itself. We have been at work on the law until we get as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain. Let us trust in the merits of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. May God help us that our eyes may be anointed with eyesalve, that we may see. (1888 *Materials*, p. 557; emphasis supplied)

When this was edited and printed in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* on March 11, this is how she put the confession about the law:

As a people, **we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain. We must preach Christ in the law**, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of

God. **We must not trust in our own merits at all, but in the merits of Jesus of Nazareth.** (*1888 Materials*, p. 560; emphasis supplied)

The over-emphasis on the law was clear, but it had not produced righteousness, as she wrote in 1895:

This message of the **gospel of His grace** [given through Elders Waggoner and Jones, p. 1336] was to be given to the church in clear and distinct lines, **that the world should no longer say, Seventh-day Adventists talk the law, the law, but do not preach or believe Christ.** (*1888 Materials*, p. 1337; emphasis supplied; see also p. 890)

There was but little love for God or man, and God gave His messengers just what the people needed. (*1888 Materials*, p. 1339)

A message of law is ineffective that does not produce the fruit of that love which fulfills the law. There is but one way to do that, and that is to build the message on faith. Ellen White immediately in 1888 recognized the missing element from Rev. 14:12, and how it fit:

The third angel's message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. **The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand.** I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness. (*1888 Materials*, p. 217; emphasis supplied)

In 1889 she repeated the observation:

The soul-saving message, the third angel's message, is the message to be given to the world. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are both important, immensely important, and must be given with equal force and power. **The first part of the message has been dwelt upon mostly, the last part casually. The faith of Jesus is not comprehended.** We must talk it, we must live it, we must pray it, and educate the people to bring this part of the message into their home life. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. 2:5. (*1888 Materials*, p. 430; emphasis supplied)

She was still writing of the need and the solution in 1890:

Let Jesus be our theme. Let us with pen and voice present, not only the commandments of God, but **the faith of Jesus.** This **will promote real heart piety as nothing else can.** (*1888 Materials*, p. 728; emphasis supplied)

We have evidence that this need still exists. Thank God that He still offers the solution! But we also still hear strains of, "You're undermining the law." Truly we must learn the lessons of the past to assist us in our present challenges. Let us turn back to Paul to see what God will teach through the next five chapters, and the last four questions we will consider.

Core Themes of the Gospel

Paul proceeds in chapters four and five to describe further the justification by faith he affirmed in 3:28. He gives a stellar example of this experience, describes the fruits of it, and in an amazing set of parallel verses explains the foundation that underlies it. In addition to the themes we have already seen, here are the important concepts he develops in these chapters and their frequency:

Concept	Times in Chapter 4	Times in Chapter 5
reckon/count/impute	11	1
promise	5	
grace/gift/freely	2	12

Reckon/Count/Impute

Paul uses Abraham to illustrate how righteousness comes, as well as how it doesn't come. He quotes the declaration of Moses who wrote that when Abraham believed God, God *counted* that action as righteousness. Paul at length develops the truth that when a person responds positively from the heart to God's reaching out in promise, in grace, in salvation, God *reckons* that faith response as righteousness. Note how the parallels can be drawn.

4:3	Abraham believed God, and it	was counted [of grace] unto him for righteousness	to him that worketh	is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt	4:4
4:5	to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith	is counted for righteousness	[to him that works, but does not believe on Him that justifies the ungodly, his unbelief]	[is counted for unrighteousness] [compare Luke 18:10 parable]	
4:6	blessedness of the man, ... without works [but with faith]	unto whom God imputeth righteousness	[cursedness of the man with works (and unbelief)]	[unto whom God imputes unrighteousness]	
4:8	blessed is the man	to whom the Lord will not impute sin	[cursed is the man]	[to whom the Lord will impute sin]	
4:9, 10	faith ... when he was in uncircumcision	was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness	[unbelief when one is circumcised]	[is reckoned for unrighteousness]	
4:11	father of all them that believe , though they be not circumcised;	that righteousness might be imputed unto them also			
4:20-22	he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith , ...being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able to perform. And therefore it	was imputed to him for righteousness .	[unbelief]	[is counted unrighteousness]	

<p>4:23, 24</p>	<p>it was not written for his sake alone, that it</p> <p>but for us also, to whom it</p> <p>we believe on Him that raised up Jesus</p>	<p>was imputed to him</p> <p>shall be imputed, if</p>			
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These relationships affirm what he states later in his letter, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (14:23). The actions that appear to be a fulfillment of the law may in truth be "works" that coexist with a heart that has chosen unbelief, has resisted God. And God, reading the heart, does not impute righteousness to such a heart condition or the action resulting from it, even if religious in character. They are unjustified in their condition. But of someone whose heart says, "Amen!" to God's promise, as did Abraham, even when they have no outward sign of law keeping, God declares that faith as righteousness, for indeed it is. And you can be certain that such faith immediately has evidence of its presence, for faith works. That is the way it establishes the law. And that is why God is not dealing with false balances when He counts faith as righteousness. Nowhere is He said to count unrighteousness as righteousness, or unbelief as righteousness.

It is important to note that 4:17, where God "calleth those things which be not as though they were", is not referring to the reckoning He had done regarding Abraham's faith. That is, Paul is *not* here saying, as some construe him to, that "God counts Abraham who is not righteous as though he were righteous." The verbs are different (*calling* versus *counting*). The *calling* that God is said here to do actually describes the promise that Abraham believed, which faith God counted righteousness. The *calling* is referring to God's "speaking of and to the dead as though they were alive", and the dead are "quickened". So here it is saying that "God calls Abraham who is not alive as though he were alive." God said to Abraham in essence, "Out of your dead body, and Sarah's dead body (vs. 19), I will produce a son. I promise to do this as a sign that I bring life out of death, righteousness out of sinful flesh. I am the Recreator." And when Abraham's heart went out to God and he **believed** that, regardless of his inherent deadness and where he was at the time (in law keeping or not), God looked at that dynamic of faith, and said, "That's right(eousness)!" He *counted* it what it indeed was.

Note that this *calling*, being the promise of God, is universal and applicable to all. If God were not calling and dealing with all dead sinners "as though they were" alive, none would have any chance to come to faith. And when an individual dead sinner awakens to what God has done out of His heart of infinite love to treat us in this totally underserved and gracious way, faith becomes active in the reality of God's promise, and God *counts* that faith as righteousness. Paul further develops these two phases of how God deals with sinners in chapter 5, as he weaves together the two dimensions of grace in the work of justification.

This faith in Him who raises the dead, Paul notes, is for all mankind too, not just Abraham. How does God intend for that experience to be universal? True, everyone has a sinful nature as dead to producing righteousness as Abraham's body was to producing a child. And all are called to believe the promise of the fruit of the Spirit in our dead bodies. (It is only unbelief that can abort such fruit.) But this faith in the Recreator has a firm foundation, much more stable than any part of our own experience. The greatest evidence of life out of death, greater than the birth of Isaac, greater than any work of God in us, has been provided

for us to see God's intent for the race. This was nothing less than the power He manifested when He "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (4:24). What a wonderful, universal appeal to our hearts! This Seed of Abraham, who died on account of the sins of all, and was raised on account of the justification of all, is God's strongest appeal to all to believe in Him. When the heart of anyone, grasping something of the power of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus, says, "Amen!", God responds with a holy excitement as He did to Abraham, "You've got it!"

Promise

The promise of God is what lies behind all of what we have looked at so far. It is the foundation of salvation, the expression of the purpose of God's heart toward the human race. The fact that He made it to Abraham did not mean it was just for him. It was given to Abraham because God found someone who would listen to the plans He had for all mankind. And that "listening" is but another word for faith. God came to Abraham and said, "Here is what I have planned for the human race. I will bless all the families on earth through One of your descendants. My plans are so marvelous and so far reaching that the entire earth will one day be peopled only by those who are in the same spiritual family that you have joined, through your heart response to Me. Yes, it is through you that this blessing, this Blessed One will come into the world. It's true. I promise it. In fact, I covenant it. I will stake My life on it." All of God's dealings with Abraham but illustrate these plans of His heart, from His call to Abraham to the lesson of the ram caught in the thicket. Thank God Abraham believed Him!

Note how the concepts surrounding promise can be outlined:

4:13	For the promise, that he should be heir of the world, was ... through the righteousness of faith .	was not ... through the law	4:13
		For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.	4:14
4:16	Therefore it is of faith , that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed ; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham		
4:20	He ... was strong in faith , giving glory to God.	He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief	4:20

Observe that because of faith and grace, the promise is sure to every human being. For not every person is "the seed ... of the law." The law is exclusive; God's faith and grace are inclusive. Abraham had a son Ishmael who was not of promise, but of works. This son came by Abraham's not believing God, that He would produce a son, but by trusting *in himself* that he would. In essence he said to God here, "All that You have said, *I will do*." And in a broader sense every son of Isaac was a child of flesh and not of promise. The lesson God taught in the birth of Isaac, the child of promise, was that everyone should trust, not in what our poor dead flesh can do, or what genetic connections it has, but in what God promises. And that promise functions through the God-focused dynamics of faith and grace, not through human-focused works. That is how everyone, regardless of their genetic makeup, can experience the heart relationship with God that is called faith and righteousness. Thank God for how sure He made His plan to reach everyone!

It is clear that those of faith are heirs. The inclusiveness of the promise (4:16) does not lessen in the least the exclusiveness of the heirs (4:13). All are included in the promise, but only those who believe it will experience the fullness of it. Otherwise, as Paul said, there would have been no need for faith and promise, for everyone would qualify just by being humans. Such a condition would not only do away with the need for faith, but, leaving unbelief and unrighteousness in the new world to come, would do nothing to solve the problem of sin and death. That is why he so strongly affirms that "the promise ... is through the righteousness of faith" (4:13).

Grace/Gift/Freely

The way in which God pours forth this wonderful salvation is called grace. It is as if grace were a torrent of life-giving water to nourish sinners parched by sin. It is impossible for sinners to meet their own needs, no matter how hard they work at it. All they can do is accept what God is giving, and this acceptance is faith. Grace is the mighty stream of salvation pouring out of the heart of God, blessing the entire world. Faith is the conduit that channels a portion of it more directly into the heart of the one who believes, harnessing its omnipotent power more completely for the individual. Unbelief is the shield that tries to block this stream, and this barrier alone can divert the water of life from its ultimate goal. Grace is in contrast to works; gift and freely are in contrast to judgment and debt. Notice how Paul expresses these concepts:

3:23, 24	all ... being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus	[all being condemned of the debt by human works through the sale of the race into slavery in Adam]	(see 5:15)
	[to him that believeth, the reward is reckoned of grace, freely]	to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace , but of debt .	4:4
4:16	Therefore it [righteousness] is of faith, that it might be by grace ;	[righteousness is not of works, that it would be by debt]	
5:2	By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.	[we have already by works a debt relationship, which does not result in victory or joy]	
5:15	much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace , which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many [unto life]	[the works of man, and the debt that came by these works] through the offence of one [man, Adam, caused] many [to] be dead	5:15
5:16	the free gift is of many offences unto justification	the judgment was by one [offence] to condemnation	5:16
5:17	much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ	[over those under the works and the debt of unrighteousness] death reigned by ... one man's offence	5:17
5:18	by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life	by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation	5:18
5:20	where sin abounded, grace did much more abound	the law entered, that the offence [man's works] might abound	5:20
5:21	grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord	[man's works /] sin hath reigned unto death [by Adam our father]	5:21

The concepts are highlighted by contrast with their opposites. Paul did this himself particularly in 5:15-21, but when the implied is seen elsewhere, it helps as well in clarifying the theme. Note how *grace*, *gift*, and *free*, which go with the man Jesus, justification, faith, righteousness, and life, are contrasted with *works*, *debt*, and *judgment*, which go with the man Adam, condemnation, unbelief, sin, and death. These are the essential elements of the gospel that must be understood, and kept straight.

Paul saw grace operating in two dimensions. The first was the way in which it met the need that Adam brought upon the race, that of sin and its consequences. Grace, mediated through Jesus Christ, *much more* than made up for what Adam did, which the light of the law magnified. The gift actually exceeded and abounded beyond the need. Every member of the race is a recipient of this grace. So we see Paul using the universal terms of "all" and "many" (3:23, 24; 5:15, 18). Without this aspect of grace, no human being's existence would be justified, thus it is "unto justification of life" (5:18). What a marvelous gift God has freely bestowed on every one of His children! He is indeed "the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. 4:10).

The second dimension is how grace functions for the believer. When one *believes* (4:16; 5:2) and *receives* (5:17) "the abundance of grace and of the gift" already bestowed upon all, the power of God is fully released to accomplish all that His heart desires. This response of the believer does not change God, rather merely grants Him permission to do what He longs to do. While grace ministers a measure of faith to all men (12:3), in those who exercise it by a positive response to God's faith and love, grace brings the recognized and greater presence of the Spirit (5:5), with all of His character qualities (Gal. 5:22, 23), including a growing faith. These benefits of grace are *much more* than the unbeliever experiences. This is the grace wherein the believer stands against sin (Rom. 5:2). This character is the reward that comes by faith, freely, and it is righteousness, replacing the sin of the natural heart and life. It is also eternal life (5:21), for righteousness doesn't die, leading to life. What an amazing grace for the believer, to be restored to a position that honors and glorifies God! Indeed He is "the Saviour ... specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

These two dimensions are so important, we must recapitulate. How did grace find every human being? Paul describes us all as without strength, ungodly (Rom. 5:6), sinners (5:8), and enemies (5:10) of God. And rather than abandoning us, He came to us in our great need, and poured out His life *for us* (5:6, 8). His death (5:9) and His resurrection (4:25) established a justification for our very existence, freely giving life to all (5:16, 18), starting the process of reconciliation (5:10) by fully bridging the gap between justice and mercy, and grasping both righteousness and sin, affirming the one and condemning the other. This is how the solution He brought was *much more* than the problem. *This is grace in its foundation mode.*

And what does the believer receive beyond this? He experiences peace with God (5:1), the ability to stand and not fall (5:2), joy (exultation) in God in hope and in tribulation (5:2, 3, 11), and love in the heart (5:5). The promise is that he shall be saved from wrath (5:9) by the mediation of Christ's life (5:10), shall be made righteous (5:19), and shall reign in life (5:17), even eternal life (5:21). We must confess that the believer indeed receives *much more* than the unbeliever. *This is grace in its full development mode.*

[See Appendix for more thoughts on "Two Dimensions of Grace."]

Sixth Erroneous Conclusion

The law witnesses to righteousness by faith (3:21, 22), and faith establishes the law (3:31). This faith is the faith of God (3:3, 22) and the faith of man (3:25, 26). However, with

unbelief, sin comes, and the law works wrath (4:15). In fact, the combination of law and unbelief can be shown this way:

- Law + Unbelief -> Sin abounding

However, there is another combination that the gospel brings:

- Promise of God + Faith -> Grace superabounding

At each step along the way, God's solution for the sin problem has far exceeded the problem itself. Even at times when sin exploded like a cancerous growth, such as the time the law was given (5:13, 20), His grace "did much more abound" (5:20). Paul realized that some would mistakenly conclude that **more sin leads to more grace, so let's not stop sinning** (6:1). He asks,

Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Once more he responds, "Certainly not!" He has just contrasted our identity in Adam with ours in Christ, to build our faith in God's grace. Now he builds further our identity with Christ to refute such faulty logic, and strengthen faith even more. Faith in a very real sense is a matter of identity, seeing who we are when the evidence is not all demonstrated, and acting on the evidence that has been given. And what evidence we have, even the death and resurrection of Christ! Note how his parallels can be drawn between Christ and us, and our identity **with Him**:

Die		Rise	
Christ	Us	Christ	Us
His death (6:3, 5)	Baptized into His death (6:3) Buried with Him by baptism into death (6:4)	Was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father (6:4)	Walk in newness of life (6:4)
	Planted together in the likeness of His death (6:5)	His resurrection (6:5)	Also in the likeness of His resurrection (6:5)
Crucified (6:6)	Our old man is crucified with Him , that the body of sin might be destroyed [made ineffective, inactive] (6:6)		That henceforth we should not serve sin (6:6)
	He that is dead (6:7)		Is freed from sin (6:7)
Dead (6:8)	Dead with Christ (6:8)	Live (6:8)	Live with Him (6:8)

Note his conclusion of the resurrection of Christ, especially in relation to dominion (following the theme of 5:21):

		Being raised from the dead dieth no more (6:9)	
		Death hath no more dominion over Him (6:9)	

He then restates the parallel in very clear terms, "likewise".

He died unto sin once (6:10)		He liveth unto God (6:10)	
	Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin (6:11)		But alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (6:11)

He concludes "therefore" with our resurrection, giving two negative imperatives and one positive. And in similar manner to the resurrection of Christ, note how he emphasized the issue of dominion:

			(1) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it (6:12)
			(2) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (6:13)
			(3) yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (6:13)
			For sin shall not have dominion over you (6:14)
			for ye are not under the law, but under grace (6:14)

Let's look at these last four verses above in our other contrasting outline form:

	[Let righteousness reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it.] [compare 5:21]	Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it.	6:12
6:13	yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God	Neither yield ye [yourselves unto sin, as those that are still dead, and] your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.	6:13
	[For righteousness shall have dominion over you]	For sin shall not have dominion over you	6:14
6:14	For ye are ... under grace	For ye are not under the law	6:14

We can vividly see how practical Paul's theology is! Thank God for the dominion of God's grace and righteousness! Our identity in Christ, rather than countenancing sin, overcomes it. Paul thus has rejected this sixth error:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
When sin abounds, grace much more abounds.	We should continue in sin, so grace will abound.	Grace leads to my identifying with Christ's dying to sin and living to God.

Superabounding grace in the face of abounding sin does not excuse and encourage sin. The sinner who is dwelling merely under law can have victory over neither sin nor death, for the law says unflinchingly to the sinner, "You are sinful and shall die." Through the death and resurrection of Christ, grace is seen to be the realm where neither death nor sin have dominion over the sinner. Grace says to the sinner, "In Christ you are free from sin and death. Walk in that freedom." Or, as Christ said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8:11).

Seventh Erroneous Conclusion

In denying sin's right or need to reign over us, and appealing to us to exercise our faith to see and count it so as we identify with Christ like He identified with us, Paul concludes by saying that this dominion that is thereby excluded is also the dominion of law. Sin is not "over" us because we are not "under" law. However, Paul realized again that one might reach from this understanding another wrong, negative conclusion about sin and law, that **since we are under grace's dominion and not law's, sin is excused** (6:15). He asks,

Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?

He emphatically again declares, "Certainly not!" He meets this misunderstanding with two illustrations, both of which he introduces with the gentle chiding, "know ye not" (6:16; 7:1). He implies that the truth about dominion should be obvious to his readers from these real-life situations.

Servants

He first describes servants (6:16-23) who yield obedience, and contrasts being a servant of sin with being a servant of obedience. Sin does not belong in the dominion of grace. He introduces the servant idea based on choice, yielding. "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are..." (6:16). He begins the contrast:

6:16	[servants] of obedience unto righteousness	[servants] of sin unto death	6:16
6:17	ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you	ye were the servants of sin	6:17
6:18	Being then made free from sin , ye became the servants of righteousness	when ye were the servants of sin , ye were free from righteousness	6:20
6:19	now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness	as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity	6:19

6:22	But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life .	What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death .	6:21
6:23	the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord	the wages of sin is death	6:23

Grace's reign is a realm of obedience, righteousness, freedom from sin, and life. The implication is that law's domain is sin, iniquity, freedom from righteousness, and death. It must be understood that he is writing to sinners, and not unfallen beings. It is to sinners that law's reign is so negative. It is not inherent in law, as he will develop in chapter seven. All a sinner can do on his own is earn death. His only alternative is to accept the gift that God provides in grace.

Notice that the dominion I experience is based on my choice of yielding obedience as a servant would. Once I know (remember the "know ye not?") that I have a choice in the matter, I then realize I choose my master, the kingdom to which I will belong. Grace affirms but one identity for me, but being non-coercive, it allows me to accept it or reject it, and thus pick my dominion. Yielding obedience to God is faith, as the opposite is unbelief.

Inevitably, each choice has its consequences, or as Paul puts it, fruit. Nothing in life is static. Everything leads somewhere. He returns to this concept in the next illustration as well, where it fits beautifully.

So the first lesson is: *Dominion is chosen by yielding to sin or obedience.*
Grace's dominion is yielding to obedience.

Marriage

That he is contrasting grace's dominion with that of law becomes explicit as he introduces the next object lesson. Here he make the point that law's dominion is tied to people who are alive (7:1), and he illustrates this by the marriage relationship (7:1-6). The concepts relate significantly to the first part of chapter six, where he goes to great lengths to build faith in the fact that in Christ one has died ("dead with Christ", 6:8). It is there that we find the key to this parable.

Let us continue Paul's outline of contrasts to clarify the points:

7:2	if the husband be dead , she is loosed from the law of her husband	bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth	7:2
7:3	if her husband be dead , she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.	if, while her husband liveth , she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress	7:3
7:4	ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another , even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.	For when we were in the flesh , the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.	7:5

7:6	But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit , and not in the oldness of the letter.		
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Putting it more briefly and filling in the implied contrasts makes it clearer:

7:2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • husband dead--loosed • can marry another legally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • husband liveth--bound • can't marry another legally 	7:2, 3
7:4, 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the Spirit • [flesh] dead by cross • delivered from the law • married to Spirit/Christ = [in the Spirit] • [righteousness which law defines worked in us by faith], producing fruit to God [= children of marriage] • serve in newness of Spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the flesh • flesh [alive by Adam] • [bound by law] • [married to the flesh] = in the flesh • sin which law defines worked in us [by unbelief], producing fruit to death [= children of marriage] • serve in oldness of letter 	7:5, 6

This is a most powerful way of describing the intimate relationship we have had living with the flesh, and the fruit of that marriage. In a similar but converse way God now intends for us the opposite. Through the cross of Christ our flesh was put to death, so we now can be united with the Spirit. Notice how this imagery is a development of the truth Paul shared in 6:7, 8, where he spoke of being free from sin (old husband, self), and living with Christ (new Husband, Spirit).

Consider the role of the law in all this. The law had confirmed the first marriage to sin. It does this by speaking the truth to the sinner, in essence saying, "You are married to sin. You will stay married to it until you die. And your children are all stillborn."

And in a somewhat parallel fashion it blesses the new marriage (7:3, 4) to righteousness. The law does not condemn remarriage after death. (This is a parallel with Gal. 5:23 where, in describing the fruit of such a marriage, Paul says there is no law against it.) When one enters by faith into Christ's death and rises to live with Him, the law approves that union because the law also speaks the truth about righteousness. Looking at Christ, the law says to the repentant sinner, "You have the right husband. Your children are alive to glorify God." Righteous fruit is an impossibility for the sinner alone, or for the sinner by the law. This "fruit unto holiness" (6:22) is only by faith, which here is the marriage to Christ, that is, the heart responding to His love by yielding, and entering an intimate relationship with Him.

The law condemns being married to two at the same time, and calls it adultery. One can't serve two masters. It is against the law, which really means it can't work, that it is impossible. Because of the law and man's sinful condition, there are only two options for the sinner. One is to stay alive and married to flesh, which leads to death (just as the law describes). The other is to die, that is, to reckon self as having died with Christ, to enter into that experience (which meets the requirement of the law in Christ for the death of sin), and then be free to marry Christ. Again, one is a dominion in which one stays alive temporarily, but has no future married to such a husband. The other is where one's self dies for good in Christ, and, being raised in Him as well, one has a glorious, eternal future with Him.

So the second lesson is: *Dominion is chosen by living or dying.*
Grace's dominion is dying to self to be married to Christ.

And with these two lessons, Paul has removed the seventh error as a viable way to go:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
Being alive to God and not letting sin reign or have dominion means we are not under the law, but under grace.	Not being under law means we are free to sin.	Being under grace frees us by Christ's death from the dominion of sin and death, makes us servants of righteousness and grace, not of sin, and through our marriage to Christ produces in us holy fruit.

What a wonderful reign grace has (5:21)! It does not in the least countenance sin, showing instead in the person of Christ the cost of sin. These two illustrations have shown grace to be the following:

- dying with Christ: dying to the law (7:4) and being free from the law that bound us to sin (7:2, 3, 6)
- marriage to Christ (7:3,4)
- yielding obedience unto righteousness (6:16, 17)
- serving righteousness (6:18, 19) and God (6:22)
- freedom from sin (6:18, 22)
- newness of Spirit (7:6)
- holy fruit (6:22) unto God (7:4)
- everlasting life (6:22, 23)

This is the dominion of grace.

Eighth Erroneous Conclusion

Paul has repeatedly and from different perspectives shown the close connection of law and sin:

- 4:15 where no law is, no transgression
- 5:20 the law entered, that the offence might abound
- 7:5 the motions of sins ... were by the law

Further, he speaks of being free from sin (6:18, 22), and then proceeds to speak of being loosed from the law (7:2), free from that law (7:3), dead to the law (7:4), and delivered from the law (7:6). An easy mistake, he realized, was for someone to think that **the law and sin are the same** (7:7), so he asks,

Is the law sin?

He uses his strongly emphatic answer again, "Certainly not!" He then works to clarify more the relationship between law and sin. Interestingly, for the first time since 3:7, he uses his own experience to describe the realities of these concepts, continuing this personal testimony to the end of the chapter. His explanation from his own life is a development of the concept he first introduced earlier, when he wrote, "by the law is knowledge of sin" (3:20). He describes what he found in himself that the law does, what sin does, while stating the dependence of sin on law:

7:7	I had not known sin , but by the law		
	I had not known lust , except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.		

7:8	sin , taking occasion by the commandment , wrought in me all manner of concupiscence	without the law sin was dead	7:8
7:9	when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died	I was alive without the law once	7:9
7:10	the commandment , which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death		
7:11	sin , taking occasion by the commandment , deceived me, and by it slew me		

In declaring what is good and bad, what is right and wrong, the law thereby defines what is righteousness and sin. The presence of such a code doesn't create sin, but as Paul says, makes sin come alive. In other words, "the strength of sin is the law." (1 Cor. 15:56). A person can be living in sin and not know it, so to him he is doing nothing wrong. When his eyes are opened to the way God has made things, which is what the law describes, the negative nature of his actions springs to life in his understanding. So Paul says that sin did three things, "taking occasion by the commandment" (Rom. 7:8, 11). It worked in him every lust, deceived him, and killed him. In other words, when the law came to him, he suddenly saw how lustful, deceived, and dead he was, all because of sin.

It would be useful to reflect on the time when this occurred in Paul's experience. His view of his life before his conversion was that he was, "as touching the law, a Pharisee; ... touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil 3:5). Thus he is not here in Romans describing what happened when he first learned the law (which certainly was as a small child). Through his adult life as a Pharisee, he saw himself sinless. When did he come to see himself in a totally different light? When did he see the very motives of his heart (which the tenth commandment alone of the ten describes) as evil? When did the scales fall off his deceived eyes? When did he die?

He gives us a hint in another of his letters, where he confesses his deep conviction that "if One died for all, then all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). When Paul received his vision of the cross, he saw law, sin, and himself in a drastically new light. He realized that his sin caused the death of Christ, that Christ had taken Paul there with Him. The "ego" of the flesh (Rom. 7:9, 14 in Greek), which was under the condemnation of the law, was crucified there. The cross must have been what brought the correct understanding of law to Paul. Christ's death magnified the law, and shown its bright light into the heart depths of every human. Sin was that awful and that pervasive! When Paul finally accepted this light, when he pictured himself by faith as dead with Christ, he experientially died. He learned how to reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin (6:11). And he saw that the resurrection but confirmed the life that comes out of such a death—being alive to God. It was then, as he had described so vividly in chapters six and seven, that for the first time he was freed from sin. Thus he could conclude that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (7:12). It had been affirmed by the life and death of Christ. How else could this Pharisee have come to see that which occasioned his own death as something good?

So Paul strongly rejects a place on the gospel path for the eighth error:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
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Through the body of Christ we have become dead to sin and the law, and are delivered from them, so we can marry Christ.	The law is bad, identified with sin.	The law is good, in fact needful to define sin, as was most clearly demonstrated by law and sin at the cross.
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Notice elsewhere how Paul describes this experience of dying and its foundation, in relation to sin, the law and the cross:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. (Col. 2:12-14).

The cross reveals all trespasses, as well as their forgiveness. The revelation of Christ on the cross showed He was made sin *for us*, and thus revealed that God was not imputing our sin *to us*. (2 Cor. 5:21, 19). When Christ was nailed to his cross, with Him went the sentence of the law against us. Sin, sinners, and the sentence of the law were all fastened to that rugged tree *in Christ*. Jesus on the cross at one and the same time convicted all humanity as sinners and trumpeted to the world that God was not holding their sin against them. The law was holy, just, and good in its sentence, in its being against us and contrary to us. And Christ on the cross both affirmed this justice of the law and blotted out its sentence of "guilty" against the race. What an amazing accomplishment!

This is the only foundation we have for experiencing the forgiveness that comes by faith. If we reject what He has done, if by unbelief we fail to enter into what He has done for all men, "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. 10:26, 27). Those who refuse the price Christ has paid for their sins will pay their own.

Ninth Erroneous Conclusion

Not only does Paul show the intimate connection between the law and sin, he also shows how close the law was to death. He says that it was because of the law that he died (7:9). In his personal experience, though he affirms that the commandment was to life, for him it was found to be to death (7:10). The law occasioned his death (7:11). This relationship he describes here of law and death is a development of the terse earlier statement, "the law worketh wrath" (4:15). Quite easily then, one might think that **the good law kills**. So he asks

Was then that which is good made death unto me?

Again he powerfully denies such a possibility — "Certainly not!" He immediately places the blame where it belongs. It is sin, and not the law, that brings death. The law is a statement of reality. As such it cannot be the cause of what happens when someone out of unbelief attempts to live in a way God never designed for him to live. Such a faithless choice is itself the cause, the sin that results in death. Recall earlier he made the simply profound statement, "the wages of sin is death" (6:23). More closely, he has just affirmed that "sin ... slew me" (7:11). He says very succinctly in his letter to the Corinthians, "the sting of death is sin." (1 Cor. 15:56).

Of course, he could only say that sin killed him because he finally saw himself, not as blameless, but as a sinner. Moreover, the reality is that all are sinners, though not all have seen it yet. All have not yet died, seeing themselves in Christ on the cross. For them the law has yet to accomplish its work in leading them to Calvary, revealing their sin and the sentence against it. But Paul had been there. So he could clearly describe the functioning relationship of sin, law, and death, as illustrated in his own experience.

The insight Paul received showed him that instead of the law being made death to him, it was sin that was the cause of death. This revelation came "by that which is good", "by the commandment". And the intent was that sin "might appear sin", that it "might become exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7:13). The blindness he had to his sinful condition, and the terribleness of it, was removed as he saw the law and sin demonstrated on the cross in Christ. The only setting in which "the law worketh wrath" (4:15) is with sin present. In a sinless environment, the law is still present (though it is not needed there in a codified form), but there is no wrath nor death.

Paul thus has clarified the ninth detour off the way of truth:

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth
The law works wrath and has condemned us to death.	The law is deadly, identified with death.	It is sin that is deadly and kills.

We could summarize the three concepts briefly in this way:

The **law** defines **sin**. **Sin** leads to **death**.

This is the three-fold relationship Paul described in the reverse order in his powerful passage on the resurrection. "The sting of **death** is **sin**, and the strength of **sin** is the **law**." (1 Cor. 15:56). But note that Paul does not leave these in the realm of theory as he reaches the climax of describing them. He makes them very personal. For law, sin, and death do not exist in theory. They exist only in reality, in personal beings. Paul proceeds with an amazing confession of his personal identity with sin; that is, how his flesh, the nature with which he was born, was permeated with and paralyzed by sin. The only ethical way Paul could describe these realities was to relate his own experience. Never could he have described such an internal reality in another human's experience. So in the latter part of chapter seven Paul, in a way he does nowhere else in his epistles, bares his soul to make a critically important truth very clear.

The Need

There are three keys to this passage. The first we already have in hand, that he is describing himself after entering into an awareness of sin and death as defined by the law and revealed on Calvary in relation to him personally. He was a sinner under the sentence of death, alive only because he was in Christ and what He did. Paul's sin was laid on Christ, and Christ died. Out of this understanding Paul states a knowledge of the spiritual nature of the law in the first person plural "we", but immediately returns to using his experience as illustrative of these vitally important points. He confesses, in contrast to the law's being spiritual, "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14).

There is that within man, even after the corporate redemption of the race on the cross, even after the individual faith response that grasps that redemption, a nature which is unredeemed, still "sold under sin". Paul clarifies it four verses later. "In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (7:18). This flesh remains with all human beings until death or translation. What is God's provision for dealing with it?

The Deliverance

In answering this question the second key opens up the meaning of his description which follows. This key is found in another of his epistles. In writing to believers in Philippi, he said, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. 2:12, 13). Paul in this section of Romans clarifies the two distinctly different ways God accomplishes the willing and the doing.

In Willing

The **willing** comes from God's recreating in a believer a new spirit by the Holy Spirit, producing a spiritual mind. Paul describes this as "the inward man" (Rom. 7:22), "my mind" (7:23), "the mind" (7:25). This new faculty was supernaturally given him at his new birth, when he died and rose again by faith in what had already happened in Christ. Thus he could say in regard to sin, "I allow not", "I hate" (7:15), "I would not" (7:16, 19). And in regard to righteousness, he could confess, "I would" (7:15, 19, 21), "I consent unto the law that it is good" (7:16), "to will is present with me" (7:18), "I delight in the law of God" (7:22). He knew right and wrong, loved right and hated wrong, chose right and rejected wrong. This ability was *present with him* by the recreative gift of God.

The **doing**, however, is not given in a way that Paul could say it was "present with me", that it was "in my members". This is because the believer is left with the deficient flesh, which is powerless to do right because of sin. That is why righteousness is only by faith. So Paul, at the same time he confessed his new nature, was forced to acknowledge in regard to righteousness, that he couldn't do it. "How to perform that which is good I find not." (7:18). The first part of this verse makes it plain that he was not finding it "in me". If he had found it there, it would not have been by faith. The "sin that dwelleth in me" (7:17, 20) was the "evil [that] is present with me" (7:21), the other "law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (7:23). This is how he could confess that *he* was "carnal, sold under sin" (7:14). God had not yet redeemed experientially the body. This ability was *not present with him* by the recreative gift of God. But that is not to say it was not at all present.

The question then is, how does God provide the doing, for Paul nowhere countenances the believer's walking in sin. In answer to his desperate cry, "Who shall deliver me...?" (7:24), he affirms that God has provided a way "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (7:25). Chapter eight is devoted to describing the two aspects of this second phase of deliverance. Let's preview them. First in this life, with the flesh still present, this doing of the good of the law comes only "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you" (8:11), "if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" (8:13). This provision then is the momentary indwelling of the Spirit, which comes by faith. He described the same experience of faith earlier when he said, "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (6:11). Thus "the righteousness of the law" is "fulfilled in us" by this dynamic faith. God provides the doing, and gives victory over the sin dwelling in the flesh, as illustrated in the incarnation of Jesus (8:3). (We will shortly outline this deliverance in doing, *in walking*.) Secondly, in the life to come, deliverance will come through "the redemption of our body" (8:23). For this final deliverance "we ourselves groan within ourselves", because of the willing God has already placed in us, which is "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (8:23).

I Myself

Paul's conclusion at the end of the passage in chapter seven summarizes powerfully the truth of this conflict. "So then with the mind [the willing] I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [the doing] the law of sin." (7:25). What we must not miss here is the double emphasis he makes in the original language. He adds two extra words to impress the reader that he is describing what "*I myself*" can and cannot do. The heart acceptance of this truth at one and the same time removes any trust in self, and casts one's hope only on Someone outside of self.

This hybrid state is the battleground of the Christian. It is the source of his greatest conflicts. *And it is so because God saw the wisdom of it.* How better to learn to hate sin, than to have a mind that loves righteousness while in a body bent to sin and incapable of obedience? Paul rightfully calls this situation "wretched"! (7:24). The "body of this death" is a graphic picture of the corpse of our fallen nature that we have with us in this life. This description is the third key that unlocks the passage. For the only other place in the New Testament this word "wretched" is used is in the message to the angel of Laodicea. The similarity between Paul and Laodicea is that *in themselves* they were wretched. The difference was that Paul knew it, and Laodicea didn't.

Paul's *condition* in chapter seven must never be read with a period at the end. As noted, the description of nature but raised the question of deliverance that the next chapter answers. So we see in chapter eight a description of Paul's *walk*. Walking in the Spirit is righteousness by faith, the fruit of the Spirit, works of faith. Walking in the flesh, which is the only other alternative, encompasses both works of law and works of flesh. Paul showed this parallel nature of law and flesh when he confronted the Galatians for leaving the gospel. Note the contrast between faith/Spirit and law/flesh.

Gal. 3:2	[Received ye the Spirit] by the hearing of faith ?	Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law ?	Gal. 3:2
Gal. 3:3	having begun in the Spirit ,	are ye now made perfect by the flesh ?	Gal. 3:3

The Foundation

Before we outline similarly the contrasting walks in chapter eight, let us reflect briefly on what Paul does to introduce the deliverance we already summarized. The source of deliverance is "Jesus Christ our Lord" (7:25). What Jesus Christ did in His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection provides an all-sufficient reconciliation, atonement, redemption, deliverance. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. 5:19) This universal, unconditional non-imputation of trespasses provides the absolutely necessary foundation for powerless sinners to experience by faith what this deliverance can mean in this life, namely, remission of sin and victory over sin in the flesh. This foundation "in Christ" (Rom. 8:1, 2) of "no condemnation" (8:1) and "freedom from the law of sin and death" (8:2) was accomplished by God through Christ, not through the law. Our sin caused the law to be powerless in restoring righteousness (8:3). This is why John so pointedly declared, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17). This grace and truth provides life and the seed of faith for all men. What a gift God gave to the entire race in Christ!

This "unspeakable gift" of God (2 Cor. 9:15), His "sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" successfully "condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). The purpose was not just to make a point that God was right and sin was wrong, but to show how "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" poor, powerless sinners. This fulfillment, this deliverance which Paul proceeds to outline (which we show below),

must then be the lessons he learned out of the incarnation of Jesus, how His life brought the grace and truth of righteousness by faith to a doomed race of sinners. This is the practical development of the realities outlined in chapter five, where Paul contrasted Christ with Adam. We will now see another revelation of Jesus Christ, as we contrast the walk in the Spirit with the walk in the flesh. Realize that this outline but continues the same contrasts we have noted throughout the epistle beginning in chapter one, between righteousness by faith and its alternative. Some of these earlier corresponding passages are referenced.

In Walking

8:4	who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit	[who walk not after the Spirit, but after the flesh]	
8:5	they that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit [cf. 7:6]	they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh [cf. 7:5]	8:5
8:6	to be spiritually minded is life and peace [cf. 5:1; 6:11, 22]	to be carnally minded is death [cf. 6:21; 7:5]	8:6
	[the spiritual mind is reconciled to God: for it is subject to the law of God, and only can be] [cf. 5:11; 6:17; 7:16, 22]	the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be [cf. 5:6, 10, 20]	8:7
	[they that are in the Spirit can please God] [cf. 6:17, 22; also Enoch, Heb. 11:5]	they that are in the flesh cannot please God [cf. 5:8, 10]	8:8
8:9	ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you [cf. 7:6]	[ye are in the flesh, and not in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God does not dwell in you]	
	[if any man have the Spirit of Christ, he is all of his]	if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his	8:9
8:10	if Christ be in you [by faith], the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness [cf. 4:19, 20; 5:17 6:11]	[if Christ be not in you by faith, the body is alive because of sin; and the Spirit is not life because of unrighteousness] [cf. 6:20, 21; 7:5]	
8:11	if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you [cf. 5:19, 6:4, 5, 11, 13; 7:4]	[if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead does not dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead cannot also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that does not dwell in you] [cf. 6:13, 14]	
8:12	we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh		
8:13	if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live [cf. 5:21; 6:11, 16, 22]	if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die [cf. 5:21; 6:21; 7:5]	8:13
8:14	as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God [cf. 4:24]	[as many as are led by the flesh, they are the sons of the devil] [cf. John 8:15, 44]	

8:15	ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father [cf. 3:24; 4:6-8; 5:5]	[ye have received the spirit of bondage to fear; ye have not received the Spirit of adoption, whereby you could cry, Abba, Father] [cf. Gal. 4:30-5:1; Heb. 2:15]	
8:16	Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God	[Spirit cannot bear witness with your spirit, only to your spirit, that you are the children of God]	

Christ also referred to this contrast that Paul has developed:

John 3:6	that which is born of the Spirit is spirit	that which is born of the flesh is flesh	John 3:6
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God began this process of the Spirit for all men in Christ. It bursts into birth in those who believe, and then grows in those who continue the walk of faith, reckoning themselves to be dead with Christ to sin and alive to God and righteousness. This enables us to experience the deliverance from the bondage and fear of orphans, and grow into our real identity of children of God, actual "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (8:17). It shows the meaning, purpose, and necessity of suffering "with Him" (8:17, 18; cf. 5:2-5), knowing that before honor comes humility, before power comes purity. This life is seen to be the preparation for the life to come. What a hope we have!

Redemption of Our Body

The deliverance Paul saw ultimately for "the body of this death" (7:24) was the final "manifestation of the sons of God" (8:19), when all creation will be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (8:21), at the time when we experience "the redemption of our body" (8:23).

Within these mortal bodies we experience "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (8:23), which causes us along with "the whole creation" (8:22), to "groan within ourselves" for the time when this mortal shall put on immortality (cf. 2 Cor. 5:2-4). While the Spirit gives victory over the flesh by faith even now, we long for an unwretched condition of nature, when all is in harmony again. Amazingly, Paul informs us that the Spirit "likewise" joins us in groanings, as He "helpeth our infirmities" of nature by making "intercession for us" (Rom. 8:26). What hope that gives us!

Christ Himself, who groaned when facing our infirmities of sin and death (cf. John 11:33, 38), shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Rom. 8:17, 22 cf. Isa. 53:11), because He will be but "the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), born of the Spirit. His own life as the new Head of humanity outlined in atonement this process of righteousness by faith for the entire race, which will be experienced by those who believe: predestinate, call, justify, glorify (8:30). And thus this marvelous Being, God's "own Son" whom He "delivered ... up for us all", declares God is "for us", that He will "freely give us all things" needful for glorification (8:31, 32), that He does not condemn, but justifies (8:33, 34; cf. John 8:11). He along with the Spirit "also maketh intercession for us" (8:34). Oh, that all would see it, believe it, and enter into it!

The Gospel's Guarantee

And so Paul has returned to the theme of chapter one, where he affirmed that all Members of the Godhead promised and declared the good new of salvation by what Christ did here

on this earth (1:1-4). He described the Holy Three again in chapter five, where he vividly related the outpouring of Their love as the foundation and fruit of the atonement (5:5-11). Now he in a climactic focus again describes all three Members of the Godhead dynamically active in the gospel process. He concludes with a portrayal of the essence of Their character, the lifeblood and the powerhouse of the universe. "The love of Christ" (8:35) is so magnificent, so far reaching, that nothing of the earthly enemies in our sufferings in this life, and nothing of the universal issues and contestants in the great controversy with sin—nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus" (8:39). The good news of this love indeed is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who has faith.

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.
Rom. 16:25-27

Note to the Reader

What is your response to the good news? Does your heart sense His powerful but gentle love, drawing you to Him? What will you do with His gifts to you? Above all, He has given Himself to you. What will you do with Him? It is my prayer that you will "feed on His faithfulness." (Psalm 37:3).

Summary

Gospel Concepts

1. The gospel is a revelation of God's love, His power, manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This power is to salvation, justification, atonement. (1:1-4, 16; 4:25; 5:8, 11, 16). This was necessary because of the next three realities.
2. Unbelief leads to sin. (3:3; 14:23). Sin leads to death. (1:18, 32; 4:15; 5:12, 21; 7:9, 11).
3. All the world, being guilty of sin, is under condemnation. (3:9, 19, 23). Condemnation is to death. (5:12, 15, 16). Adam brought sin, condemnation, and thus death. (5:12, 15, 18).
4. The law both defines what sin is and prescribes the penalty of death. (3:20; 4:15; 7:7-9). The law gives life to sin. (7:9). The law justifies no sinner. (2:20). In a sinful setting, the law is unto death. (7:10). Knowing the law, by itself, does not result in doing the law. (2:12, 17-23; 3:3). A revelation of the law in the face of unbelief even makes sin get worse, because unbelief resists the light and moves further from it. (5:20). God sometimes uses law to make things worse, so men will see the need of another way to righteousness. The law does witness to the righteousness which comes in a way other than law, namely of faith, because the law witnesses of Christ. (3:21, 22). The law has righteousness (8:4), but cannot give it; so righteousness is not of the law.
5. Christ gave Himself, became man, overcame his nature, and took all men's sin to the cross. (8:3). When He died, all died; all were reconciled. (5:10; 2 Cor. 5:14-19). His death revealed the wrath against unrighteousness, sin. (1:18). The cross revealed the love of God for the powerless, ungodly, sinful enemies that the race had become. (5:6, 8, 10).
6. When Christ rose, His gift of Himself was affirmed as adequate. This combination of the cross and resurrection shows that it is only because of who Christ is and what He has done that any are alive; He justifies their existence. (4:25). They now have the ability to yield obedience to whomever they will. This faith ability, or seed faith, is given to all. (12:3). Justification is to life. (5:16, 18). Christ Himself is the promise, the gift of grace to the race, redeeming it. (3:24; 4:16; 5:15). This Gift far exceeds any extent of sin. (5:20).
7. A consequence of sin in all humanity is that all are dead to the ability in themselves to obey, to produce righteousness. This remains true as long as the body has the sinful flesh nature which is powerless and under condemnation. (4:19; 7:18, 23-25). Because of this, when a sinner promises to obey with any trust in himself, he like Abraham (who at one point said by his actions, "I will do it.") will be shown to produce only children of the flesh. (4:4). Like Israel at Sinai, a faithless, self-confident declaration of, "all that You have said, we will do", but results in the abounding of sin. If a sinner could in himself produce righteousness, he would need neither the promise of God to produce it in him, nor faith to lay hold of what God had promised. (4:14). [In reference to these listed points, he would not need #8 or #9, nor what they were rooted in, #1, #4, and #5. He would only need a "gospel" of sin, death, and law from points #2-4. Such is righteousness by works.]
8. The only hope of a restoration of righteousness is the promise of God to reproduce it in us. Christ's atoning life and death for the race also illustrated how God works in sinners to do righteousness. (4:17; 8:3, 4). The powerless condition of humanity necessitated God's promise which in essence said to the sinner, "You are dead. I will do it for and through you. I will resurrect the dead."

9. When a revelation of the word of God awakens the seed of faith, one grasps the above truths. This results in his acknowledging by faith, his identifying by conscious choice with, his yielding to, each of these truths. He confesses:
- a. God's love—shown in the gospel
 - b. sin—its awfulness and its consequence
 - c. his guilt—he is sinful in very nature and deserves death; and all the world is with him
 - d. the goodness of the law—it is right in defining him as a sinner, and condemning him to death
 - e. Christ's death—in his behalf, and every other human
 - f. Christ's resurrection—sealing the justification of the race's existence, of its second chance through the gift of faith
 - g. his utter inability—in himself there is nothing that can produce righteousness
 - h. his only hope—God's promise, founded and evidenced in Christ, shown also in the experience of other people of faith

10. This faith is reckoned righteousness because it grasps the realities that exist in Christ for all men. (3:25, 26, 28). This heart confession of these realities (which were all real and true even before the believer confessed them) results in the experiential death of his old nature. (6:3-8, 11; 7:2-4, 6, 9, 10; 8:10, 11, 13). The believer becomes free from sin. (6:18). While faith acknowledges the inability of self, it also removes the heart focus from self and puts it onto God, as Abraham illustrated. (4:19, 20). Like Paul, it leads one to declare that *he* cannot do it, but God will. It is the choice that Paul describes as a yielding to God and righteousness. (6:13, 19). One stops resisting God. Then the new nature can be born, begin to grow and produce its fruits. (6:13, 22; 7:4). This is the only way, by faith, that he can produce holy fruit, righteousness. This is why Abraham's faith in God's promise alone was deemed righteousness, resulting in the child of promise. (4:3, 20-25). Not only is the believer dead to the old nature with Christ, he is also alive to the new nature with Christ. (6:4-8, 11, 13; 7:4; 8:6, 10, 11). After the death comes the resurrection. *This is the only way to life*. This takes the law past the hearing stage, clear into the heart where it is written (7:22), cutting off the flesh (2:29), and resulting in the doing of the law (2:13), its righteousness being fulfilled (8:4). This both establishes the law (3:31) and frees us from the law (7:2-6). A heart response to the evidences of God's love in the natural world can also lead to a life of righteousness by faith (2:14, 15), though it does not always do so (1:18-20). Faith enables one to stand in grace, not fall, through all the trials of life (5:2-5; 8:17, 18), being focused in hope on the source of grace and love (5:5-11; 8:23, 24). This faith is the receiving of the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness (5:17).

11. In the judgment God will reveal the secrets of the hearts, faith or unbelief, and consequently show the outward works for what they really are—works of faith (righteousness), or works of flesh (iniquity) and works of law (formalism) (2:15, 16). Faith will be seen as trusting wholly in Christ. Everything else will shown to be contaminated with self.

*There is much light yet to shine forth
from the law of God and the gospel of righteousness.
This message,
understood in its true character,
and proclaimed in the Spirit,
will lighten the earth with its glory.
—1886, the angel guide (1888 Materials, p. 166)*

Death to Life

Note the recurring theme of "death to life" [the amazing transition from points #2-#4 to point #10] which runs through Paul's entire gospel presentation. He first introduced it when in chapter one he spoke of how the Spirit declared Jesus Christ to be the Son of God "by the resurrection from the dead" (1:4). In chapter two he refers to it as the "circumcision of the heart" (2:29), which results in obedience from the heart (by faith). This life is the justification (3:24, 28) in chapter three in the face of universal guilt. He illustrates it in the experience of Abraham in chapter four, who was dead (4:19), but by believing God, was resurrected to produce a child of promise, the fruit of faith (4:19, 20). In chapter five he makes the universal, corporate contrasts of the death from Adam, and the life from Christ (5:17, 18). In chapter six, it is identifying with Christ's death to the old life, and His resurrection to the new (6:8, 11). He vividly pictures in chapter seven the deadness of the body (7:24), the old husband (7:2, 3) in contrast to the living Redeemer, the new husband (7:4). And in chapter eight he returns to the resurrection of Christ (8:11) to show the power of the indwelling Spirit over the deadness of our flesh (8:2, 10) with its indwelling sin.

*For the wages of sin is death;
but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Rom. 6:23*

Appendix

Themes of the nine questions:

1. oracles of God (3:1)
2. faith of God vs. man's unbelief (3:3)
3. justice of God vs. man's unrighteousness (3:5)
4. sin (unrighteousness) (3:5)
5. law and faith (3:31)
6. grace and sin (6:1)
7. law, grace, and sin (6:15)
8. law and sin (7:7)
9. law and death (7:13)

Remaining four questions:

10. Rom. 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.
11. Rom. 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?
12. Rom. 11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.
13. Rom. 11:11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid.

Summary of 9 errors and the truths each side of them

#	Truth	Erroneous Conclusion	Correcting Truth	Page
1	Those who have the law in the heart (faith) and thereby do righteousness will be saved.	<i>What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?</i> (3:1) There is no advantage to being a Jew.	The written word of God, given to the Jews, is the most powerful agent to build faith, as it reveals the faith of God. (Rom. 10:17)	3
2	Unbelief leads to unrighteousness, even in those who have the law which reveals God's faith and righteousness.	<i>Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?</i> (3:3) Man's unbelief makes the faith of God (1:17) ineffective [same word as "destroyed" in 6:6].	God's truth and faith are effective against sin, not lessened by unbelief, in fact, stimulated by the needs of unbelief and sin.	4
3	Sin has led to a revelation of God's glory that was never seen before.	<i>Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?</i> (3:5) God is unrighteous to condemn sin (to take vengeance or reveal wrath, 1:18) if it results in His glory. "Let us do evil, that good may come."	The cross, putting together sin and the person of God, glorified God and affirmed Him as judge (John 12:31), as there He condemned sin by demonstrating His wrath against it.	5
4	The Jews have the oracles of God, and their unbelief has not caused God's faith to be ineffective.	<i>Are we better than they?</i> (3:9) Jews are better. [literally, "run ahead"]	The law, rather than making the Jew better, condemns all mankind universally as sinners.	5

5	The sinner is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.	<i>Do we then make void the law through faith?</i> (3:31) The law is made void by faith.	Faith excludes the law as means to righteousness, but establishes it as a definition of sin, and writes it in our hearts as an internal expression of its righteousness.	8
6	When sin abounds, grace much more abounds.	<i>Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?</i> (6:1) Sin makes grace bigger. We should continue in sin, so grace will abound.	Grace leads to my identifying with Christ's dying to sin and living to God.	19
7	Being alive to God and not letting sin reign or have dominion means we are not under the law, but under grace.	<i>Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?</i> (6:15) Not being under law means we are free to sin. Dominion of grace allows sin.	Being under grace frees us by Christ's death from the dominion of sin and death, makes us servants of righteousness and grace, not of sin, and produces in us holy fruit, with which the law agrees.	22
8	Through the body of Christ we have become dead to sin and the law, and are delivered from them, so we can marry Christ.	<i>Is the law sin?</i> (7:7) The law is bad, identified with sin.	The law is good, in fact needful to define sin, as was most clearly demonstrated by law and sin at the cross.	24
9	The law works wrath and has condemned us to death.	<i>Was then that which is good made death unto me?</i> (7:13) The law is deadly, identified with death.	It is sin that is deadly and kills.	25

Study Table

You may wish to use this to make your own notes as you study.

Truth	Erroneous Conclusion Revealed by Question	Correcting Truth
Chap. 1 & 2	<i>What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? (3:1)</i> [There is no advantage to being a Jew.]	
3:3	<i>Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? (3:3)</i> [The unfaithfulness of the Jews made the faith of God ineffective.]	
3:5, 7, 8	<i>Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (3:5)</i> [God is unrighteous to take vengeance (or reveal wrath) against that which highlights His goodness. Let us do evil, that good may come.]	
3:2, 4, 6	<i>Are we better than they? (3:9)</i> [Jews are better.]	
3:27, 28	<i>Do we then make void the law through faith? (3:31)</i> [Faith makes the law void.]	
5:20	<i>Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (6:1)</i> [Increase sin to increase grace.]	
6:12-14	<i>Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? (6:15)</i> [Dominion of grace allows sin.]	
7:4-6	<i>Is the law sin? (7:7)</i> [The law is bad, identified with sin.]	
7:8-10	<i>Was then that which is good made death unto me? (7:13)</i> [The law is deadly, identified with death.]	

Two Dimensions of Grace

- (1) The grace of God leading to my belief
- (2) The grace of God given after I believe

The two dimensions of grace noted in "Core Themes on the Gospel" are ubiquitous in Scripture. And never is the first one mentioned without the second. We can see an illustration in this statement of Christ:

- (1) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
- (2) that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

These are, as it were, two strands of truth tightly woven together. Never were they intended to be apart. That is, what God has done in grace for all men has the purpose always of leading to His work of grace in the life of a believer. He designed for His universal work to lead individuals to respond to Him. God's plan was for the foundation of the gospel always to have a house built upon it, a temple wherein He can dwell. Switching metaphors, what He began in a conception and gestation sense for all humans He designed to lead to birth, growth, and maturity. He did not intend for the process to be aborted. This is why these two dimensions are interwoven so closely in Scripture.

His unconditional, universal, absolutely necessary work which He accomplished for all has two goals.

1. To provide the very existence of the possibility of something more, by:
 - a. justifying the continued existence of sinners, by not holding their sin against them;
 - b. purchasing the entire race back from Satan, which we call redemption;
 - c. preserving a residual of His image in all;
 - d. granting to all a measure of faith, which could be called seed faith; and
 - e. thereby enabling all to have the freedom and ability to choose their master, the kingdom to which they will belong.

None of these would have been even possible without this marvelous gift of grace, Christ giving Himself for the world. Thus anything and everything good that any human being has or experiences is completely a gift of the unreserved, unconditional grace of God. This is the love, the faith, the goodness of God.

2. To lead dynamically to something more, to be the goodness that leads individuals to repentance, to demonstrate His faith and love in reality in order to awaken faith and love in each human, to uplift Christ (who was love incarnate) and thus draw all to Him.

Put briefly, the unconditional portion of grace accomplished necessary, universal realities in salvation, and, by means of these very accomplishments, is the dynamic intended to lead the individual to faith and love, unleashing the rest of grace for eternal salvation.

The first goal, which He has accomplished, will be the witness to the entire universe for eternity that God has done all He can. Even the lost will be led one day to confess that. The only thing that separates these two dimensions—that tears apart this integrated fabric of salvation and the gospel, that would prevent the building of the house, that would abort the process begun at conception—is the same mystery of iniquity that began the problem in the first place—unbelief, a love of sin. It is a resistance to the flood of grace nourishing this sinful planet.

The bulk of Scripture and the inspired writings deal with the necessity of one's response to God, with the life and growth of the believer (the second dimension). This makes sense because this is the ultimate goal of the gospel—restoration of human beings into His image. How much time is spent on laying the foundation of the house, compared to the superstructure and furnishings? How much time is occupied in conception and gestation of a human being, compared to the years from birth to and through maturity? So we see why so much is written for the believer. But how important is the foundation? How significant is conception and gestation? In the gospel realm these are awesomely important questions.

Human philosophies and shortsightedness inevitably neglect a part of the whole. But the whole alone will accomplish all that God intends, especially for the end-time in which we live. Consider the consequences of failure to see and accept the totality of this grace:

- (1) A focus on the first dimension to a neglect (or even denial) of the second results in mistaken ideas that God has done it all, even to the point of all being eternally saved. It leads to a depreciation of the value God places on the individual's response of faith, and the life of faith flowing from that. And with no vision of what God intends in these areas, the reality of such a life of restoration is impossible. James especially witnessed to the reality of the second dimension.
- (2) On the other hand, an emphasis on the second dimension in which the first is little seen or appreciated tends to overemphasize the importance of the believer's faith and its fruits, even to the point of those meriting something for the believer. It leads to undervaluing the very foundations of the plan of salvation, inadequately measuring and appreciating that which God has done for all and for each, before the individual's faith becomes active. And with the root of faith and love poorly seen or totally missed, the fruit of faith and love are stunted or totally absent. Paul especially witnessed to the reality of the first dimension.

Historically, the Seventh-day Adventist church has erred on the side of overemphasizing the second dimension and undervaluing the first. (See again the section "Righteousness by Faith in the SDA Church in 1886-1895.") This has produced a religion that is more form than heart, more external than internal. Recall that the theme of Jesus and the faith of Jesus "will promote real heart piety as nothing else can." (*1888 Materials*, p. 728). Those who have a burden for a church whose faith is strong and manifested in the real-life obedience of love to God and man would well learn the *means* by which God designed such an experience to be developed. Else they will be found to be opposing the only means to accomplish what they desire to see.

A simple illustration can help to clarify this issue of means. If one wishes to build a tall building, taller than any other, *one must lay the foundation deeper than any other*. Indeed, the two dimensions are proportionate, the extent of the second depending on the grasp of the extent of the first. The more one is convinced of and motivated by that fact that the grace of God given to this world in Jesus Christ is complete, universal, adequate, infinite, and immeasurable, the deeper, broader, and longer will be his heart and life devotion to God.

Let us put all of this into a more eschatological (end-time) setting. The evidence from Scripture is that God is actively restraining the forces of evil and destruction until His people are prepared to stand in the storm that will come upon their release. What is it in a practical sense that will accomplish such a preparation? When the devil throws all his powers against a feeble human being, what enables that human to stand and not fall? A quick response is "faith." But there the shallowness of our condition is revealed. Faith in what? *Faith in Whom?* Faith is but a response to something, Someone. The smaller the object of faith, the smaller the faith. When God's people begin to grasp more adequately the

dimensions of His faith and love, the stronger and more unshakable will be their faith and love.

As the identity of God's people is attacked by Satan at the end, the endurance of their identity will be proportional to the depth to which they see their identity rooted in what God has done for them in Jesus Christ. A believer's faith ultimately rests in evidences of God's plan for him long before he can remember faith in God. Just as a child's identity in a human family dates to his very conception and the nurturing events long before his birth, so the believer must come to grasp the realities that occurred in his behalf long before his conversion. The degree of maturity which he shall achieve is directly related to how deep and solid he sees the root of such identity to be for him and the entire human race.

The infinite treasures of truth have been accumulating from age to age. No representation could adequately impress us with the extent, the richness, of these vast resources. They are awaiting the demand of those who appreciate them. These gems of truth are to be gathered up by God's remnant people, to be given by them to the world; but self-confidence and obduracy of soul refuse the blessed treasure. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Such love cannot be measured, neither can it be expressed. John calls upon the world to "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." It is a love that passeth knowledge. In the fullness of the sacrifice, nothing was withheld: Jesus gave himself. God designs that his people shall love one another as Christ loved us. (1888 Material, p. 764)

How little has Christ been preached! The laborers have presented theories, plenty of them, but little of Christ and his love. As the Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of his love, so the Spirit came to glorify Christ by revealing to the world the riches of his love and grace. If the Holy Spirit dwells in us, our work will testify to the fact, we shall lift up Jesus. Not one can afford to be silent now; the burden of the work is to present Christ to the world. All who venture to have their own way, who do not join the angels who are sent from heaven with a message to fill the whole earth with its glory, will be passed by. The work will go forward to victory without them, and they will have no part in its triumph. (1888 Material, p. 765)

Satan has been having things his own way; but the Lord has raised up men and given them a solemn message to bear to His people, to wake up the mighty men to prepare for battle, for the day of God's preparation. This message Satan sought to make of none effect, and when every voice and every pen should have been intensely at work to stay the workings and powers of Satan there was a drawing apart; there were differences of opinion. (1888 Material, p. 210, 211)

God has opened to us our strength, and we need to know something about it and be prepared for the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. But here is our strength, Christ our righteousness.... (1888 Material, p. 347)

The world is a second Sodom, the end is right upon us; and is it reasonable to think that there is no message to make ready a people to stand in the day of God's preparation? Why is there so little eyesight? So little deep,

earnest, heartfelt labor? Why is there so much pulling back? Why is there such a continual cry of peace and safety, and no going forward in obedience to the Lord's command? Is the third angel's message to go out in darkness, or to lighten the whole earth with its glory? Is the light of God's spirit to be quenched, and the church to be left as destitute of the grace of Christ as the hills of Gilboa were of dew and rain? Certainly all must admit that it is time that a vivifying, heavenly influence should be brought to bear upon our churches. (1888 Material, p. 423)

In the love of God has been opened the most marvelous vein of precious truth, and the treasures of the grace of Christ are laid open before the church and the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What love is this,--what marvelous, unfathomable love!--that would lead Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners. What a loss it is to the soul who understands the strong claims of the law, and who yet fails to understand the grace of Christ which doth much more abound. It is true that the law of God reveals the love of God when it is preached as the truth in Jesus; for the gift of Christ to this guilty world must be largely dwelt upon in every discourse. It is no wonder that hearts have not been melted by the truth, when it has been presented in a cold and lifeless manner. No wonder faith has staggered at the promises of God, when ministers and workers have failed to present Jesus in his relation to the law of God. How often should they have assured the people that "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (1888 Material, p. 1225)