

# **Commentary on the Book of Romans**

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**(Translated from Arabic)**

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# General Introduction

**1. Rome was named after its founder, Romulus, in 753 BC.** It bears his name. It was built on a high place, on a hill of the seven hills and then expanded to include all the hills.

**2. Its scope and influence expanded until it became the capital of the Roman state, which conquered the entire Mediterranean basin.** Rome became a meeting place for the world's leaders and politicians, and a center for sciences, literature, and philosophy. It became famous for Roman law, which is still studied in most universities around the world. As an open country, Rome was filled with the abominations of pagan filth from all over the world, which is clearly shown in the first chapter. We know from history that its people, in their paganism, had a savage nature and took pleasure in throwing slaves to beasts to be eaten, and they enjoyed the conflicts of slaves to death in their arenas.

**3. The population of Rome in the first century is estimated at about 2 million.** A third of its inhabitants were slaves. There were a large number of Jews in the city, led by Pompey, the Roman commander, as prisoners when he took over Syria in 63 BC and settled them in a part of the city. These Jews were then liberated and multiplied until they became about 16,000 in number during the time of Apostle Paul. These Jews lived in peace and comfort most of their time in Rome, except during the reign of Tiberius in 19 AD, and during the reign of Claudius Caesar in 49 AD, who ordered all Jews to be expelled from Rome (Acts 18:2). This was probably due to the Jews' riots against Christians, so Tiberius expelled both Jews and Christians.

## **4. The emergence of Christianity in Rome:**

A) It is mentioned in the book of Acts that on the day of Pentecost, devout Jews from every nation were present, among them were "Roman settlers, Jews and proselytes Acts 2:10". These people accepted faith in Lord Jesus and returned from Jerusalem to Rome, preaching among their Jewish brothers. And if we know that those who believed and were baptized on the day of Pentecost were 3000 people of all nationalities. and let there be several hundreds of them from Rome, these were the seed for Christianity. The Holy Spirit was working strongly with the preachers in the early church, so Christianity quickly spread in Rome. The letter to the Romans was written around the year 57 AD, which is about 23 years after Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. During this period, the church in Rome grew.

B) The Roman state was characterized by freedom and easy mobility within it, especially between different countries and the capital. Rome was a meeting place for major leaders and traders. Without a doubt, a group of them, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, entered it, coming to testify to the Lord in Rome. Among them were people who heard the teachings of Apostle Paul in some cities of Achaia and Macedonia (both in Greece), and cities of Asia Minor, and believed in these teachings. This is confirmed by Saint Paul's greeting to many whom he mentioned by their names in the last chapter of the letter, indicating that they were his disciples and acquaintances, even though he had not gone to Rome before writing this letter. Notice Paul's saying in (Romans 1:6-7) "those in Rome..." Therefore, they are not originally from there but have recently migrated or moved to it.

C) When many, if not all, Jews were expelled from Rome by Claudius to other cities, then returned to it again, some of them had believed in Lord Jesus, an example of that are Aquila and Priscilla who met with Apostle Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-2) and believed through his ministry. These two and others participated in establishing the church there (Romans 16:5), and they had a church in their house. They carried news of the church of Rome to Paul, and through them, he found out about the believers who had believed through his ministry and were living in Rome, so he sent his greetings to them in chapter 16 of his letter.

D) It is clear from the letter that none of the apostles had established this church until the writing of this letter, as it was the principle of Apostle Paul, "I made it a point to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation (Romans 15:20). And when he writes in the same letter, expressing his strong desire to go to them, and that he has been prevented several times, and finally decided to visit them (Romans 1:9-10) + (Romans 15:22-24). This confirms that none of the apostles had visited Rome before. We also see Paul's eagerness to visit Rome in Acts 19:21 and God's answer to his longing in Acts 23:1. Paul did indeed go to Rome, but as a prisoner, however, he preached there through his imprisonment first. He found there were Christians in Rome (Acts 28:13-15).

E) Apostle Paul felt that he was an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7-11), so he felt responsible for this city as the capital of the Gentile world at that time.

F) The Catholics say that Peter went to Rome in 41 AD after the Lord released him from prison (Acts 12:7-17). In (Acts 12:17), it says that Peter went out and went to another place. The Catholics say that Rome is the other place. They also claim that Peter continued in Rome for 25 years and was its first bishop. However, the majority of scholars in the East and the West do not accept this view. On the one hand, Peter was present in Jerusalem until the Apostolic Council, which was held around 50 AD

(Acts 15). He was also in Antioch in 55 AD, where he met with Paul (1 Peter 5:13). If Peter was the one who established the Church of Rome, Paul would not have written his letter to the Romans, nor would he have expressed his longing to visit it, for he does not preach where Christ was named. If Peter was in Rome, Paul would have mentioned his name first among those he greeted (Rom 16). The letters of captivity that Paul wrote while he was in prison in Rome do not mention Peter's name. However, the organization of the Church of Rome was later carried out by both Paul and Peter between the years 62 and 67 AD.

### **5. The time and place of writing the letter.**

The Apostle wrote this letter anticipating his visit to Rome. He had decided this on his way to Spain (Romans 15:23-24), after going to Jerusalem carrying with him the gifts of the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia to their poor brethren in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-26 & 1 Cor 16:1-16 & 2 Cor 8:1-4). Thus, he wrote it during his third missionary journey from Corinth, in the house of a man named Gaius, whom the Apostle described as his host and the host of the whole church (Romans 16:23). He was one of the two whom the Apostle baptized (1 Cor 1:14). The Apostle dictated it to Tertius, as Apostle Paul had very weak eyesight. The deaconess Phoebe, a servant of the church of Cenchreae (Romans 16:1), carried it to Rome. Cenchreae is the eastern port of Corinth. As Apostle Paul went to Jerusalem in the spring of 58 AD, most of scholars believe that it was written between the years 57 and 58 AD.

### **6. The emperors who were contemporaries of Apostle Paul:**

1. Tiberius - During his time, Paul believed. He died in 37 AD, ruling for 18 years.
2. Caligula - He died in 41 AD.
3. Claudius - He died of poisoning in 54 AD.
4. Nero - (During his reign, Paul was martyred) Nero committed suicide in 68 AD.

### **7. A timeline of Apostle Paul's ministry.**

Acceptance of Paul's faith in Christianity - 36 AD.

First visit of Paul to Jerusalem - 38 AD.

Second visit of Paul to Jerusalem - 44 AD.

Start of the first missionary journey - 45 AD.

Third visit of Paul to Jerusalem and the First Council of the Apostles in Jerusalem - 49 AD.

Start of the second missionary journey - 50 AD.

Fourth visit of Paul to Jerusalem - 54 AD.

Start of the third missionary journey - 54 AD.

Fifth visit to Jerusalem, which is the last visit - 58 AD.

Imprisonment in Caesarea - 58-60 AD.

Deportation to Rome - Autumn 60-61 AD.

First imprisonment of Paul in Rome - 61-63 AD.

Acquittal and the beginning of his second preaching in Europe - 67 AD.

Re-arrest and imprisonment - 67 or 68 AD.

Martyrdom - 68 AD.

## **8. The importance and purpose of the epistle:**

A) Due to the importance of this epistle, St. John Chrysostom used to read it twice weekly. This letter was directly responsible for the conversion and transformation of St. Augustine. It has been called the "Cathedral of Christian faith" as it contains elements of the Christian faith. The eighth chapter of this epistle is referred to as the "Holy of Holies of the Cathedral." Paul the Apostle presented this letter as an essay that touches upon the faith of the Church and accurately expresses the evangelical life, hence it was called the "Gospel of Paul."

B) Since he was intending to visit Rome, the Apostle wanted to address the issues present in Rome before heading there.

C) The early members of the Church in Rome were a mixture of converted Jews and Gentiles, with the Jewish element possibly being more predominant. The Apostle's words were directed towards both groups, urging them to live in love and peace and to experience the unity of the Spirit as members of one body. The Jewish members, due to their strict upbringing and strong attachment to their heritage, culture, and religious beliefs, struggled to easily let go of their sense of superiority even after accepting the Christian faith. They would often look down upon the converted Gentiles under the pretext of:

1- They are children of Abraham and heirs of the promise given to Abraham's descendants.

2- They are recipients of the Mosaic Law, unlike others.

3- They are God's chosen people alone.

Therefore, with this mindset that they lived in their Jewish past, pride rooted in them due to a lack of understanding of their adoption as children of Abraham, the purpose of the Law, and the meaning of God's chosen people. They believed that even after accepting faith in the Messiah, they remained in a higher position than others. As for the Gentiles, they took an opposing stance as a reaction to the Jewish mindset. They looked down upon the Jews and saw them as a stubborn people, believing that the door had closed on the Jews and opened wide for the Gentiles. Additionally, they admired the philosophy, knowledge, and greatness of the Gentiles.

Paul wrote his letter to explain to the Jews the true meaning of being children of Abraham, emphasizing that their lineage to Abraham or adherence to the Law would not be the cause of their salvation. He also wrote to the Gentiles, stating that their philosophy would not save them. He emphasized that there is no advantage for anyone in accepting salvation and faith, but it is a gift and mercy from God. The Law points

to sin but does not give me the power to avoid it. As for the philosophies of the Gentiles, they led them to fall into impurities. Therefore, the Apostle spoke about the need for both Jews and Gentiles for salvation and the universality of salvation. He explained that the door has opened for the Gentiles just as it has for the Jews through faith. Paul explained the concept of faith and its necessity for salvation.

D- In this letter, we see that Paul calls for respect towards governing authorities and the payment of taxes, even in the face of persecution against the Church.

## **9. The main themes in the epistle:**

### **1. Faith and Free Salvation**

Saint Paul lived in internal struggle before his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Outwardly, he appeared as a proud and righteous Pharisee, being a Hebrew of Hebrews from the chosen people of God, zealous for the law, practicing rituals diligently, and observing commandments. However, deep within his hidden self, when he honestly confronted himself, he found that he was extremely weak in the face of sin and incapable of enjoying an inner holy life. He realized his need not just for commandments and teachings, but for a renewal of his nature. He also noted his pride in his righteousness before his faith in Christ, as seen in Romans 6:1-4. The difficulty of living a holy life under the law was expressed by the disciples themselves when they tried to impose the law on the Gentile converts, saying, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). The Apostle Paul found in faith in our Lord Jesus, and by faith alone, not by the works of the literal law such as circumcision, washings, and purification, that he was buried with Christ and rose in the waters of baptism to become a "new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Here we see that the condition of humanity before Christ is similar to the situation of the disciples when they tried to catch fish all night without success. But when Jesus entered the boat, the situation changed, and they caught a great number of fish. The world was unable to live in righteousness before Christ, and in this regard, the Gentiles who did not have the law were equal to the Jews who had the law. The difference is that the law frightened the Jews and some refrained from sin out of fear. That is why the apostle said that the law was our tutor leading us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). However, this does not mean that there was no internal suppression and longing for sin. This is what the disciples expressed in Acts 15:10. But when Christ came into our lives and salvation was given through faith, believers received true justification. Paul experienced the new life in Jesus Christ, not as a superficial change or the adoption of new teachings, but something greater. He enjoyed the power of living faith and a comprehensive transformation in his new life. It involved sanctification of the heart, emotions, thoughts, and desires, as well as all the energies of the soul and

body, through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This sanctification means dedicating and consecrating oneself to God. "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26) This transformation is achieved by shifting the center of one's being from a state of enmity with God under the law of sin (as no one was able to fulfill all the commandments of the law) to a state of sonship to God (which we obtain through faith in the Lord Jesus and baptism, by which we are established and united with Christ the Son, becoming children of God the Father), something that the law of Moses was unable to accomplish.

When the Apostle speaks here about faith alone without works, he is not referring to the spiritual struggle that arises from true faith (both positive and negative struggle), nor does he speak about the importance of works and striving for grace to be active in the baptized believer. Rather, he is speaking about...

A- The Apostle is referring here to the works of the law in their literal sense. The dispute between the early members of the Church, whether they were Jewish or Gentile converts, was not about spiritual warfare, but rather about the works of the law. The Jewish converts demanded that the Gentiles first adhere to Jewish practices such as circumcision, observance of Jewish washings, and purification rituals in order to be accepted in the Christian faith. The Apostle condemns this movement that seeks to return believers to the literalness of the law and the outward performance of works.

B- The works of a person before faith in Christ. Whatever good works a person may do without faith in Christ, they are of no benefit. The inner self is still defiled (Jeremiah 17:9).

C- The works that believers do and boast about as the cause of their salvation. This is considered self-righteousness, which the Jews fell into as they sought righteousness in themselves (Romans 10:3). However, the Apostle Paul focused on living faith that works through love (Galatians 5:6), which connects the believer to the Lord Jesus. Through faith, the believer is united with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:6), crucified with Him (Romans 6:6), raised with Him (Romans 6:5), lives with Him (Romans 6:8) is glorified with Him (Romans 8:17), inherits with Him (Romans 8:17), and suffers with Him (Romans 8:17). The Son of God died in our place for the forgiveness of our sins, and now He lives in us for our liberation from the power of sin. We now live by His life in us, and through Him, we are saved (Galatians 2:20 & Romans 5:10). His life in us is what makes us a new creation, free from the dominion of sin.

## **2. The universality of salvation.**

The Apostle Paul's belief in the Lord Jesus Christ shook the foundations of his zealous mindset. After being like any other Jew, embracing the idea that the whole world was created for the sake of the Jewish man and to serve him, he came to realize God's all-encompassing love for all humanity, regardless of nationality, gender, abilities, or behavior. Christ came for Jews and Gentiles, for men and women, for children and the elderly. He came to seek and sanctify sinners and transgressors. He came for



everyone. That is why the word "everyone" or its equivalent is repeated about 70 times in this letter. The Apostle refuted the Jewish argument that they were the descendants of Abraham, the father of the fathers, by calling them to spiritual sonship through faith, raising them to be children of God, which brings inner freedom. He also refuted their claim that they were the recipients of the law, declaring that the purpose of the law was merely to mirror and expose sins and flaws, but the law had no power to change their nature. The law pronounced judgment on them, leading them to the Savior, the giver of life. This was the purpose of the law (Romans 10:4). Finally, he refuted their argument that they were the chosen people of God, chosen to proclaim the extension of God's arms to the whole world, to embrace a people who were previously unknown, and to make the nations that were unloved beloved by their faith in Him, after a long period of rejection. God is the creator of all and concerned with the salvation of everyone.

#### **10. Words that are repeated in the epistle.**

There are terms that are repeated in this epistle, namely "grace, righteousness, and holiness." The Apostle does not present theoretical definitions or intellectual concepts, but you feel that he wants to lead every believer into experiencing and enjoying these divine blessings and gifts that he himself has experienced.

#### **First: Grace (Charisma).**

As the Apostle Paul addresses the topic of "the universality of salvation," he frequently speaks about grace as opposed to the works of the law in their literal sense. The Jews wanted to justify themselves through the works of the law, but the Lord Jesus came to bestow free grace upon all humanity for justification (Ephesians 2:5-9). The Apostle uses the word "**grace**" in contrast to the word "**wage**." What we receive from God is not a wage for our actions, but a free gift that God has given through the sacrifice of the cross, flowing from His divine love. Notice that if we were to speak of wages in our conversation with God, if someone prays or fasts and then seeks a wage, God will remind them of their sins.. and the wage of sin is death. But for those who feel and believe that they have received sonship, became children of God and experienced the grace that has transformed their nature, you find them fasting and praying out of love as a child to their Father, not seeking a wage. Those who seek a wage are still living with a narrow Jewish mindset. But those who live, experiencing the love of Christ and enjoying the work of grace within them that has changed their position from being a slave seeking wages for their works to being a child, they have eternal life (Romans 6:23 & Romans 5:15).

It is worth noting that the word "**grace**" (charisma) is a military expression, used when the emperor ascends the throne or celebrates his birthday, where he bestows free gifts to his soldiers as a display of his generosity and kindness. It is not in exchange

for any specific work they have done. In a similar way, when the Lord Jesus was exalted on the cross and reigns over souls, He bestowed grace upon all humanity. This grace is His salvific work, which is centered on His dwelling within the soul to establish the believer in Him through His Holy Spirit, enabling them to enjoy the embrace of the Father. This is His gift, that the believer may partake in the Holy Trinity through the merits of the precious blood, bearing the divine image and enjoying sublime heavenly characteristics. The question here is, what work could a human do to deserve all of this? Rather, all human works were defiled! Therefore, we understand that the redemption of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church are free gifts that are not in exchange for any work done by a human.

Saint Athanasius the Apostolic sees that this divine grace, which was manifested in its fullness on the cross, is not something new. At the time of creation, God established through His creative grace the existence of all things out of nothingness, and by His grace, He distinguished humanity from the rest of creation. He created humanity in His image and likeness. Moreover, out of His grace, He bestowed upon them the inheritance so that they would not lose paradise but live in it forever, without sorrow, pain, or anxiety, but in eternal joy. However, when humanity lost this divine grace, the Son of Man came incarnate to restore to humanity what was lost by renewing their nature through a greater grace.

There is a definition by one of the scholars "Grace is the power of God given freely into the hands of man.. But it is not given without condition, it prepares man with the Holy Spirit to the gift of salvation to enjoy the final new eternal life, declared and arranged in the Holy Bible.. by Jesus Christ and presented to the whole world".

**Therefore, we understand that there are two types of grace.**

1. The work of Christ and His redemption (His incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection) and the sending of the Holy Spirit. This is a free grace directed to the whole world, and it is available to everyone who believes.
2. The grace that is the power of change that changes the believer and makes him a new creation is the work of the Spirit that dwells in the believer, to change him into the image of Christ (Galatians 4:19). This grace depends on our struggle. Grace does not take away free will. Hence, we understand that our spiritual struggle (both negative and positive) is not offered as a price for grace, but rather as a declaration of our serious acceptance and response to God's free grace. As for those who resist and oppose, they lose the work of grace in them. Those who refrain from spiritual struggle, or those who follow their sensual desires or sins, opposing the voice of the Holy Spirit, these people lose the work of grace in them, and they even complain about the power of sin over them. Struggle is necessary for our salvation so that we do not lose God's free grace. However, we do not consider our struggle or our good deeds as self-righteousness on our part. The believer does not know what his left hand (pride in his work) is doing what his right hand (his struggle and his good deeds) is doing. Therefore, let's accept God's grace and His love initiative. This grace works in us to

sanctify our will and our deeds. And with our seriousness in sanctifying the will and the work, the heart opens more to accept the divine work, and thus we rise from glory to glory, and practice the holy life with struggle and toil through the free grace.

Grace, then, is God the Father's gift and His salvific plan that He offers us in His Son Jesus Christ, who on the cross bore us in Him to enjoy what is His. He has given us His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of fellowship that dwells in us, which raises us to paternal embraces as sanctified sons in truth. Thus, the word "grace" in the mind of the Apostle Paul was linked to God's free salvific work, with the aim of raising us from the condition under the law, i.e., under its judgments, to the state of sonship and our new position (Romans 5:2).

There are instances of God's gifts and His grace that He gives to some, such as the grace of apostleship that God bestowed upon the Apostle Paul (Romans 15:15).

In the next paragraph, we see an illustration of the state of humanity before the law, during the law, and after grace. We see the necessity of struggle for grace to fulfill its work in restraining wrongful desires and making sin appear dead (Romans 8:3).

However, if a person falls short in their struggle, grace diminishes (1 Thessalonians 5:19) and sin dominates the person.

**\* The Christian believer and the work of grace with him which requires struggle**

**\* Man before Christ and before the Law**

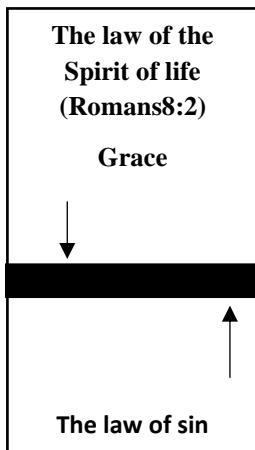
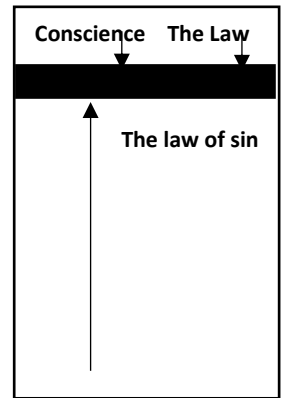
+ conscience is the natural law.

Here we find that the law of sin presses against man.

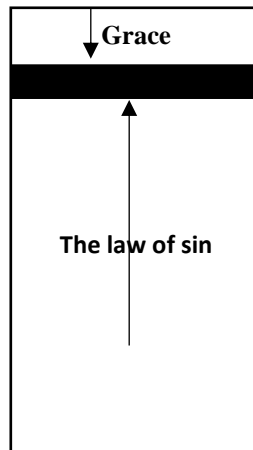
The conscience resists the fault, but the law of sin has influence the man.

**\* Man during Moses' Law**

+ The Law with its power of discipline and punishment became helpful for the natural law against the law of sin. Thus, the Apostle Paul said that the Law was to discipline man till the Advent of Christ (Romans 3:24) "You gave me the Law as an aid" (The Gregorian Liturgy)

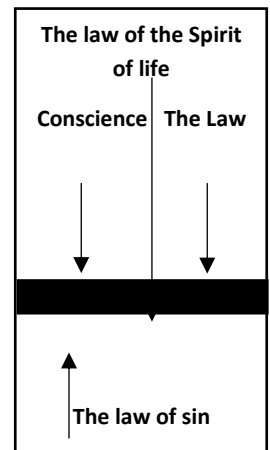


For a person who struggles, we see that God's grace suppresses the law of sin as if he is dead to it completely and his members are dead before it.



We find that a person who does not struggle always complain that sin has extreme power over him.

The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other (Galatians 5:17).



It is through Christ that we are gifted the grace, and it is a mighty power but only given to those who struggle.

**\* The Christian believer**

## **Secondly: Justification.**

The sinner is sinful by nature, and we are all sinners by inheritance from our father Adam. I was in Adam when he sinned. And since I was born from Adam, I am a part of him, a sinful part born in sin (Psalms 51:5) and there is nothing in my power to do to change this nature or this fact, even if I tried to improve my behavior. If my grandfather had died at the age of three, I would not have existed at all, but I would have died in him as well. I was in Adam when he sinned, so his nature became corrupt, and I inherited his nature and the results of his sin. (This is what is called the unity of humanity, as all humanity comes from the person of Adam). It became impossible for any human to live righteously. Not only does he not commit evil, but he also does good, it became impossible for any human to refrain from negatives or to do positives. And man felt his failure to justify himself before God "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). During the natural law, the righteous Job cried out, how can a man be justified with God (Job 9:2 & Job 14:15-16 & Job 25:4-6 & Psalms 130).

And God gave us the law as an aid, but the law revealed sins like a mirror and was not able to change our nature so that we do good, and therefore no one under the Mosaic law could abide by it. For if a man breaks one commandment, even in thought or intention, he is considered a breaker of the law and is not justified. Indeed, the law was a yoke that none of our fathers could bear (Acts 15:10). But the Jews tried to justify themselves in their own eyes, thinking that righteousness lies in their physical descent from their father Abraham, or their literal observance of the deeds of the law, or their belonging to God's chosen people, regardless of their lives. The result was that they pursued the righteousness of the law, which is based on observing it from the outward (Romans 10:2). They did not understand that the purpose of the law was to make them aware of their weakness, their helplessness, and their need for a savior. This is what David realized when he cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalms 51).

Righteousness in the Bible means doing good and being free from sin. Therefore, righteousness is the attribute of God alone, the Holy One who is without sin. That's why when the young man asked Jesus, saying, "Good Teacher", Jesus responded, "No one is good except God alone." This was to draw his attention that righteousness is the attribute of God alone. As for the Jew, he was proud to be righteous according to the law (Philippians 3:6 & Romans 3:19-20). From this, we understand that the Jews not only took pride in their righteousness, but they also loved to give themselves grand titles that indicate their righteousness and goodness. We also understand from Christ's response to the young man that he is correcting these concepts. The righteousness in the Jewish concept was the commitment to the commandments of the law, and they tried to abide by it despite the corruption inside and the existence of suppression within them and the lust for sin. And whoever externally committed to the commandments of the law fell into the sin of self-righteousness, which is a blind pride because they did not see the corruption inside. That's why the Lord likened them to whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. When the Jews thought that their adherence to the letter of the law justified them, this was a reason for their admiration for themselves, and with this they attributed righteousness to themselves. So here, Jesus is drawing the young man's attention that righteousness belongs to God alone. The meaning behind this is... do not seek righteousness and goodness in implementing commandments but in the presence of God within you. And it means that there is no need to call me good if you do not believe that I am God, and your belief that I am God is what will give you eternal life. And this is what Christ came for. Christ came not to give us new commandments but to give us his life and clothe us with his

righteousness after he purifies us with his redemption, clothe us with Christ's robe of righteousness so the divine justice sees us through the righteousness of Christ. In short, justification in Christianity is the acquisition of Christ's righteousness, because man could not be righteous by nature (by natural law) or by Mosaic law. The law of Moses does not lead to salvation, but it was our tutor to bring us to Christ, while the sin had a terrible power under the law, and whoever refrains from sin refrains out of fear of the law's penalties, which causes suppression. But Christ's righteousness is a comprehensive renewal of life and purification of consciences by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14 & Hebrews 10:22). And we see in the letter to the Romans the free justification of Christ (Romans 3:24-25 & Romans 5:9 & Galatians 2:16). The meaning of free salvation and free justification is that Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, not for our righteousness, but He died for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). And when we say that God is righteous, it means that He is Holy and that He is Righteous in His promises to us (Romans 3:3-4) despite humanity not responding to his salvific work.

### **How is a person justified?**

God is the one who justifies, meaning He gives His righteousness to man. This is what Christ did when He died for us, thereby satisfying the demands of divine justice on our behalf, our sins were forgiven, and He rose to raise us with Him, giving us His life and righteousness to live by. So, righteousness is the manifestation of Christ's attributes in our lives. Life in righteousness is impossible for man without the work of Christ and His grace.

### **Vindication and justification**

**Vindication:** It means that a person becomes without accusation. This is because Christ, through His death for us, paid the ransom and forgave our previous sins.

**Justification:** It means that a person lives and performs righteous deeds out of passion, love, and fervor.

**Example:** A man catches his wife in an act of betrayal and hands her over to the authorities to be judged. This was our situation before Christ. Let's imagine that the court acquitted the woman (this is the work of Christ's forgiving blood), but this is not enough for the woman as she is still deprived of her home and children. Here comes the complete meaning of justification. It not only means forgiveness of sins but also that Christ has given us His life, uniting Himself with us so that we may live in righteousness as children of God, belonging to His household (this is like the woman returning to her home). Justification, therefore, is not only the forgiveness of sins but also that the believer becomes righteous in the sight of God, a member of God's household, a child of God, and the children of God live to do righteousness as they are made in the image of God. This cannot be accomplished by human effort alone but by Christ, the divine, living in us and giving us His life. These righteous deeds performed by the believer are what benefit them on the Day of Judgment when God will reward each person according to their deeds (Romans 2:6-8). Therefore, justification, in its complete meaning, is the removal of wrath from us and the pouring out of the Father's divine favor with all its blessings. This was accomplished by Christ forgiving our sins with His blood, and the Father immediately accepting us as His own. Indeed, it is not enough that Christ gave us His life for us to enter into His righteousness while being negligent or having a mere verbal faith (the saying of the Scripture applies to us: "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me." (Matthew 15:8)). But God requires faith that works through love (Galatians 5:6). Let us also note the importance of striving in order to attain this righteousness. And pay attention to

the verse "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). From here, we understand that the condition for Christ to live in us is that I accept crucifying my sinful desires and lusts. Just as the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, He also convicts us of righteousness, meaning He convicts us if we fail to do righteousness. The Spirit first convicts us of sin, convincing us of the corruption of the path of sin, then He gives us assistance to leave our sin, and then He convicts us of righteousness, persuading the believer to do righteousness, and when the believer is convinced, He gives him assistance to do righteousness, for "the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses" (Romans 8:26). The Holy Spirit within us continually transforms us into the likeness of Christ, the righteous one (Galatians 4:19). We reject evil and do righteousness. Righteousness, in its negativity, means ceasing to do evil, and in its positivity, it means bearing the attributes of Christ actively working in us. Note the importance of striving to do righteous deeds, for the Spirit does not assist the slackers. Therefore, this message, which speaks of free righteousness, emphasizes the importance of striving to do righteousness (Romans from Chapter 12 to 15).

Justification, holiness, and glorification go hand in hand, unlike the drawing, but this drawing is for illustration purposes only.

### **Thirdly: Holiness.**

Holiness is a characteristic that is unique to God Himself, who calls Himself "the Holy One" (Leviticus 11:44-45 & Leviticus 20:26, Leviticus 22:2, 1 Peter 16:1). He pours out this attribute upon His beloved creation, considering them holy and attributing Himself to them through His calling as the Holy One of the saints (Daniel 9:24), and He refers to His people, whether in the Old or New Covenant, as a holy nation (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9). The Holy Spirit, also called the Spirit of holiness, is the one who grants us a holy life by entering us for our steadfastness in Christ the Holy One, so that we bear His characteristics within us and the saying that we should be holy as He is holy is fulfilled (Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16). This free gift is given to those who strive, not as a reward for their striving, but out of their response to the overflowing grace of God, enabling them to walk in holiness. The apostle calls the striving believers "called to be saints" (Romans 1:7), not because they have attained the perfect life of holiness, but because they walk in it, eagerly desiring to reach its perfection. When we say that God is Holy, it means that He is exalted above all the world, earthly things, and materialism. The place where God dwells becomes Holy, meaning that it cannot be approached except under certain conditions (Exodus 3:5). Therefore, holiness began to be attributed to everything related to God on earth, such as the temple, its vessels, the priests, the feasts, the Sabbath, the people, and Jerusalem, and even the entire land of Palestine became holy. When we say that God is **H**oly, it means that He transcends earthly things, and what is called holy is dedicated exclusively to God. A holy person is one who becomes dedicated to God in their thoughts, senses, and body parts, being preoccupied with heavenly things and with God, devoting themselves to Him. Holiness comes after justification, and it is impossible to say that a saint has not had their sins forgiven. A saint's members gradually transform into instruments of righteousness dedicated to God instead of being instruments of sin that work for the world.

## The path to justification, sanctification and glorification:

Here we move to be witnesses of God and see Him

The Resurrection and getting the resurrected body (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:43)

**This is the glory** which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18)

mortification of the flesh (Romans 7:24)

That in whom God lives, this is the glorified (Zechariah 2:5), but what we have now from glory is invisible.

One who is sanctified becomes an abode of the Trinity (John 14:23) +

(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3: 16).

**Sanctification** means to be devoted to God and our members work for the Glory of His name.

The more we walk in the path of **justification**, the more our members become dead to sin

Thus, they no longer become instruments of sin but are devoted to God as instruments of righteousness. (Romans 6:13).

### Justification is the path to sanctification

Through this we fulfill "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians 2:20).

The Spirit gifts the believer from the righteousness of Christ and His life (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21).

The Spirit renews the world of righteousness (John 16:8). That means that the

Spirit convinces man to do positive deeds of righteousness.

The work of the Holy Spirit (the grace) gives the believer a power to crucify his desires

and lusts sharing Christ in His Crucifixion.

The Holy Spirit convinces the Christian of how corrupted is the path of sin (Jeremiah 20:7).

The Spirit renews the world of sin (John 16:8), then comes the Sacrament of Confession.

By baptism we become sons of God, and then, by the Chrism the Holy Spirit comes upon us.

By baptism our sins are forgiven, and so man becomes freed from sin (Romans 6:7) since Christ has paid the price.

The second step is baptism which is death and resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:3-8).

The entrance to justification is faith "being justified by faith," (Romans 5:1).

(2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:18)

The path of justification

**Justification, sanctification and glorification occur at the same time, not as shown in the drawing since it is only for explanation.**





# **An Introduction To the Book of Romans with Focus on the Concepts of Salvation**

## **God created man for eternal life: -**

1. In the first verse of the Holy Bible “In the beginning God created ....” God has declared His will to give life as He never creates death.
2. God created the universe in billions of years for man so as to live in a beautiful paradise. Is it reasonable that God created man to live for only a few years and then die?
3. The tree of life was available to Adam, and if he chose to eat of it, he would not die. Instead, he freely chose to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
4. A rainbow was God’s covenant with Noah that He would not destroy the earth again. Then, we hear in Revelation that John saw a rainbow round about the throne like an emerald (which is green). Here, it means that God has remembered His covenant with man that He would never destroy him again. God’s will for man is to live eternally (the green color refers to life).
5. Christ’s redemption was to grant us an eternal life.

## **God created man to be happy: -**

1. The name of the garden is Eden. It is a Hebrew word which means joy. It is God’s will to make man happy.
2. Delight was a result of the mutual love between man and God since God is love and Adam was created in God’s own image. Delight comes out of love.
3. God blessed man (Genesis 1:28).
4. Christ restored to us love and joy (the fruit of the Holy Spirit).

Man fell as he freely chose to do what is opposing to God’s will. Thus, man tasted evil, became separated from God and died. God had known that Adam was weak, so He didn’t want Adam to taste evil before eating of the tree of the life. For this reason, God prohibited Adam from eating of the tree of knowledge. God’s commandment was for protecting man’s freedom. Adam was free as he was created in God’s own image.

**I plucked for myself the sentence of death** (The Gregorian Liturgy)

## **Breaking God’s commandments led to:**

1. **Death** with all its types (moral/spiritual/bodily/everlasting). Death is the opposite of life. In addition, man’s life has been shortened.

2. **Slavery** (the last verse in the Book of Genesis is “**and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.**” Egypt was the land of slavery). Slavery is the opposite of freedom. Notice that the Egyptians were embalming the dead as they thought that man’s soul would return after death to live a second time. So, the verse means that God allowed death and slavery of man, but with hope.
3. **The curse** (the word “curse” is the last word in the Old Testament “lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”). It is a curse for the **earth** “cursed is the ground for thy sake,” and a curse on **man** “And now art thou cursed from the earth.” The curse is the opposite of the blessing (the blessing accompanies the presence of God, but the curse is the separation between God and man or between God and the place). We do not know the limits of the curse of the earth since we do not know what exactly it was. But, what we see of earthquakes, volcanoes and epidemics ... are some of the results of that curse. The curse on man caused him to acquire a brutal nature which had a reflection on the beasts, and so, God allowed man to eat meat.
4. **Joy disappeared** as man was sent out from the garden of joy when the devil could deceive him that the pleasures of the flesh are the real joy.
5. **Diseases** of all kinds (bodily and psychological ...).
6. **Corruption of man’s nature:** man was created without corruption but sin corrupted him and man’s nature was ruined and unable to obey the law nor live in piety.
7. **Depriving man of the Holy Spirit.**
8. **Losing God’s own image and His adoption of man.**

This resulted from that the creation was made subject to futility but in hope (Romans 8:20). That proves God’s mercies since He says “For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, Says the Lord, your Redeemer.” (Isaiah 54:7-8).

Man needed a doctor, and He was Christ Who offered us redemption. **So, what did we take from redemption? ...**

**“for I am the LORD that heals you”** (Exodus 15:26)

1. Man has suffered from pain because of sin, but God turned this punishment into salvation. Death has turned into the first resurrection through repentance on the earth, and in the end, it will be the second resurrection for an eternal life.
2. Christ came to heal our nature (the good Samaritan) so as to return to the image of Christ (Galatians 4:19) to be like Him in Heaven (1st John 3:2).

People's nature has changed such as the bloody people of Rome, Saul of Tarsus, the adulterers and the idolaters. All of them changed. This change was reflected on the beasts (St. Barsoum the naked and the snake). As for nature, God made the Nile flood for the sake of Anba Paul. We have seen how blessing and holiness transfer as curse does.

3. **Propitiation** = since we became naked, Christ came to cover us (propitiate = cover) so that the Father would not see us but to see His son. Therefore, God says "Abide in me."
4. **Redemption** = the Apostle Paul summarizes this by saying "**we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ... we shall be saved by his life**" (Romans 5:10).
5. **By the death of Christ ...** we are buried with Him, so the old nature is now dead. The law has been executed and our sins have been forgiven as Christ has paid the price. The unity of Christ's infinite Divinity with His flesh made His Redemption infinite too. This Redemption is enough to forgive the sins of all people in every time and at any place "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." (Hosea 13:14). We are buried with Christ by baptism to become justified of our past sins.

**we shall be saved by his life ...** by baptism we rise with Christ united with Him as He grants us His life. By this unity, we are gifted adoption to God, and it is through this life that we can walk in piety. If we do so, we become justified, but it is the righteousness of God in Christ with Whom we are united and Who granted us His life (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our members turn to be as instruments of righteousness not of sin, review (Romans 6). This new creature in Christ is redeemed (Galatians 6:15). But this redemption is for those who can crucify the flesh with the desires and passions... (Galatians 5:24). Then, he says with the Apostle Paul "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

6. **The curse turned into blessing.** Christ was made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). It is said "for he that is hanged is accursed of God" (Deuteronomy 21:23). He endured all the results of sin which man committed (death/curse/nakedness/thorns/...). He bore all of our sins.

7. **He has become heir for us** (Hebrews 1:2) ... He glorified His flesh so as to grant us this glory (John 17:5,22). On the earth, peace, joy and the rest of the fruit of the Holy Spirit returned to us. But, those who are evil have become without peace.

**This is the story of the Holy Bible**

**Moses' Books:** God grants life but man dies. Therefore, God sends Moses to free the people from the slavery of pharaoh. We see all the story of Christ's redemption in symbols.

**Historical Books:** Through these Books we see that without a king corruption prevailed (Judges). Then, God formed a kingdom as a symbol of Christ's own.

**The Poetical Books:** There is an ascending relationship of the believer with God. It starts with colliding with God (Job), then turning to God through praying while the Holy Spirit helps, comforts and gives words man ought to say (Psalms). In addition, the Holy Spirit gives wisdom (Proverbs). The highest degree of wisdom appears when Solomon says that all is vanity (Ecclesiastes). But, the most magnificent relationship between man and God is found in (Song of Solomon) when he adores God.

**The Prophetical Books:** all of the prophets' sayings focused on showing the ugliness of man's condition, and that he deserved death, but ... all of them mentioned that the fulfillment would be in the Messiah Who would come for the redemption, review (Hosea 5:8 – 6:3).

**The Old Testament ends with the word "curse" ... awaiting for Christ Who turns the curse into blessing.**

**The New Testament:** We see fulfillment of God's promise "who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). It ends with John the Apostle saying "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And we live in joy and glory.

**Christ is the arm of God** (Isaiah 51:9-11 + 59:1,16) since he fulfilled the redemption and sent **the Holy Spirit that is the finger of God** (compare Matthew 12:28 with Luke 11:20) to complete the renewal of our nature.

### **The work of the Holy Spirit in renewing our condition**

**1. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7)**

- **Power:** To walk in piety and to support our will by convincing (Jeremiah 20:7). This is called Grace, but there must be spiritual struggle as the apostle says "We then, as workers together with him..." (2nd Corinthians 6:1). It is also power against anything frightening.
- **Love:** The Holy Spirit pours in us to love God and all people even our enemies. Through love, we can fulfil God's commandments and abide in Christ (John 15:9). Without the Holy Spirit, there is no true love. The Spirit

guides us to Christ and gives us a true understanding of Him so as to love Him (John 16:12-16). In this way, the love of God is poured in our hearts (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us of all the teachings of the Lord of Glory and opens our eyes to Heaven (1st Corinthians 2).

- **of a sound mind:** The Spirit gives us counselling to take the right decision. He counsels and convinces the believer to leave the sin follow the path of righteousness (Jeremiah 20:7 + John 16:8)

**2. The Holy Sacraments:** The Holy Spirit works in us through these Holy Sacraments.

- **Baptism:** - By Baptism we benefit from the death and Resurrection of Christ (Romans 6) as we die with Christ and rise with Him united for the eternal life. After that, we have to continue to be dead to sin and the Spirit supports.
- **Chrismation:** Through this Sacrament the Holy Spirit dwells in the baptized person and makes him established in Christ (**2nd Corinthians 1:21-22**). This means that the Holy Spirit:
  1. reprovcs us for our sins.
  2. reprovcs us for not following the path of righteousness.
  3. reprovcs the world of judgement.

So, why do we seek excuses for ourselves when we sin since the Spirit gives more grace (James 4:4-7). The spirit helps our weakness (Romans 8:26), so, why do we sin. Notice that when Christ defeated the Devil and condemned sin in the flesh, He gave us this power (Romans 8:3). This means that Christ has ended the dominion of sin over man, but we by our own will revert back to sin again. Thus, we do have power over sin. (Romans 6:14). So, the Holy Bible says “to them gave he power to become the sons of God ...” (John 1:12). So, what separates us from the adoption to God is sin. **“Restore me, and I will return”** (Jeremiah 31:18). As we have seen, the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with love to fulfill God’s commandments. It is through this love and fulfilling God’s commandments that we abide in Christ.

- **Repentance and Confession:** - It is a decision to die to sin so that we can live in righteousness. Through the Sacrament of Confession, the Holy Spirit transfers our sins, of which we confess to God before the priest, to Christ so as to be forgiven by His own blood in the Holy Communion.
- **The Holy Communion:** - “so he that eats me, even he shall live by me” (John 6:57).

- **Unction of the sick:** - It is not for healing only the flesh but for the soul and the spirit too. It's for man as a whole. It is probable that God allows a sickness to come for healing man's soul so as to be redeemed. Notice the payers of this Sacrament ... "O God heal [person's name] ..... and if he has committed sins, he shall be forgiven him," and this is what was taught by St James (James 5:14-16).

3. The Holy Spirit grants gifts for establishing the church as one body prepared like a bride adorned for her husband Who is Christ. We notice Christ saying "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

**He who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He believed in Christ theoretically.</li> <li>• He accepted to be buried with Christ, and be dead to sin in order to rise with a new life in the path of righteousness.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He dies with Christ and rises in Him.</li> <li>• He presents his body as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1 + 6:11) to make Christ's life established in him.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Therefore, faith is not just reciting words or theoretically accepting Christ as the Savior. True faith is to die in Christ with our old nature. Thus, the Salvation is a new life and a new creature that does works of righteousness (2nd Corinthians 5:17).

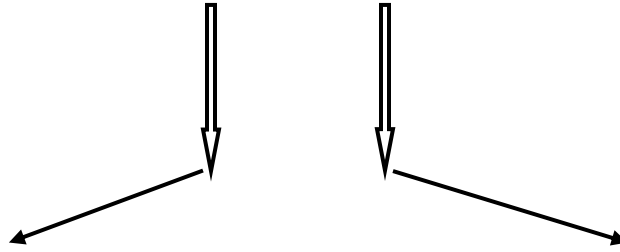
**I want to be healed** from the old nature .... **and the Spirit helps**

This is my spiritual struggle

and this is the work of God's grace that is the help of the Spirit.

This is what the Apostle said .....

**"if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."  
(Romans 8:13)**



The of the grace that helps

The mortification of the deeds of the body is done by man's free will, and this is struggle through good deeds (Matthew 12:11).

So, we say that the Holy Spirit is the life-giving Spirit. The Spirit makes man established in the Son's life to be fruitful, and we become adopted by God. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit saying "Abba Father" as it is the Spirit of adoption.

### Struggle and Grace

**Struggle:** Simply, it is to force ourselves to follow and do God's will. This is what the Lord has taught. "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

**Grace:** It is the help of the Holy Spirit and is freely granted, but according to the fathers' teaching, it is granted only for those who deserve it.

**Struggle and works:** They are of two kinds

1- Negative struggle

2- Positive struggle

Both of them need obligation.

**Negative struggle:** It is to make ourselves dead to sin (Romans 6:11-14 + Colossians 3:5), and we see in (Romans 12:1) = presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. This means that we ought not be drawn to our lusts again since what communion does light have with darkness? The Apostle Paul says "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ..." (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:27). This is a crucifixion done by man's free will. This struggle is also seen through our delight in the fruits of the Holy Spirit as these fruits are for those who crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24). God helps us with a cross of His own as He gave the Apostle Paul a thorn in the flesh, so, the Apostle says "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live..." (Galatians 2:20). Therefore, the more we crucify ourselves the more we can see the life of Christ and His righteousness manifest in our body (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:10-16). When our outward man perishes through crucifixion, yet the inward man



is renewed day by day. Thus, the negative struggle is to mortify our old nature and to accept the crucifixion by our own free will without complaining.

**Positive Struggle:** It means works of righteousness such as praying, praising, fasting ... and sparing no effort in the service. Concerning this, the Apostle says “I have fought a good fight ...” (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:7), and he also beseeches his disciple Timothy to do so (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:12). The Apostle says that he labored more abundantly than all of them (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:10). He also says “to them who by patient continuance in well doing ... Who will render to every man according to his deeds.” (Romans 2:6,7). Thus, the positive struggle is to accept the attitude in our new life which is in the image of Christ (Galatians 4:19) and through the life of Christ which is in us ... “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.” (Philippians 1:27)

**Therefore, the new life is to accept to be dead to sin and to live in righteousness through Christ’s life which is formed in ourselves so as to restore God’s image.**

**But, is struggle enough by itself? Absolutely, no. Why: -?**

1. If struggle had been enough by itself, there would not have been any necessity for the Crucifixion of Christ.
2. If there had been righteousness in Moses’ Law, Christ would have died without any reason.
3. Jesus Christ says “for without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5).
4. The Apostle Paul says “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Philippians 4:13).

**Therefore, there is a need for the grace which is a divine aid for those who struggle**

**The grace** is of two kinds:

- 1- Grace for which we do nothing.
- 2- Grace for which we need to struggle.

1- No one has been worthy of the Crucifixion, the Redemption nor the coming of the Holy Spirit. Whatever man has made, and whatever his degree of holiness is, no man has deserved the salvation without the redemption. The Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and the purest creature says “And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” (Luke 1:47). She needed the salvation through the blood of her Son, whereas she is the Mother of God. Redemption was a free gift from God to man.

2- There is a grace that requires us to struggle for. That is God’s grace which supports us to fulfill righteousness and renew our nature so as to be saved. It is said about this grace “**but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body**” for the Spirit accompanies the works of the body (Romans 2:29), and it helps our infirmities

(Romans 8:26). Also, it supports us against our deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9). This kind of grace requires struggle.

### **Examples for struggle and grace**

**Noah's ark:** Noah did his best (**struggle**) and God shut the ark from the outside (**grace**), and so, rain didn't flood the ark (Genesis 7:16).

**The five loaves:** (**struggle**) since that is all what they could get, and (**by grace**) God filled the five thousand.

**Bringing Lazarus back to life:** Wasn't God, Who brought Lazarus back to life (**grace**), able to take away the stone? This **struggle** was required from people.

**Changing water into wine:** Filling the water pots is (**struggle**) and by (**grace**) God changed water into wine.

**A piece of money in a fish:** It is an excellent parable for showing the necessity of **struggle besides grace**. If struggle was sufficient for man, God would demand Peter to catch a lot of fish so that he could sell it and pay the tribute. If grace without struggle was sufficient, God would bring pieces of money from Heaven.

**The Apostle says be filled with the Spirit** (and this is fulfilled through **God's grace** since the Spirit is a free gift from God). Filling with the Spirit requires **struggle** which the Apostle teaches us saying "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." (Ephesians 5:18-21).

**Love your enemies** (love is a **grace** and a gift from God), but this grace is given only to those who oblige themselves to talk well about people = bless them that curse you + do good to them + pray for them, this obligation is named **struggle**.

If God's grace was sufficient, why wouldn't all people become saints? That's why God says "How often I wanted ... but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37)

Notice what the Apostle says "We then, as workers together with him" (2nd Corinthians 6:1) + saying "I labored more abundantly than they all (**struggle**)... yet not I, but the (**grace**) of God which was with me." (1st Corinthians 15:10).

**Jesus Christ is still asking every one of us "Do you want to be made well?"**

**(John 5:6)**

### **Conscience, Moses' law and the grace**

**Conscience:** - God's commandments were engraved on Adam's heart by love where he was still in the garden loving God as he was created in the image of God. If man loves God, he will keep his words (John 14:23). Conscience is God's gift for all people.

**Moses' law:** - By falling into sin, man's condition spoiled and he no longer loved God nor fulfilled His commandments. Thus, God has given man the Law as a help (Gregorian Liturgy) to discipline him till the Advent of Christ (Galatians 3:24). The Law was to restraint man's desires by its fearful punishments. The Commandments were written on two tables of stone to suit the condition of man's impious heart which seemed like a stone. The Law was God's gift to the Jews.

**The grace:** - It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the baptized person. But, man no longer feels this grace when he quenches and grieves the Spirit.

Thus, the Christian rejoices with the conscience, the Law and the work of the grace.

**The Apostle Paul criticizes the deeds. Which deeds does he criticize?**

1. The ritual deeds of the Law such as circumcision, and so on.
2. Deeds done through the Jewish thought. This means those who feel that their deeds can justify and redeem them. They boast of their deeds and their self-righteousness. Therefore, they do not realize that they are badly in need of God's help. That is Pharisaism.
3. All the deeds of man before Christ are unworthy without Christ's blood (that is what the Apostle Paul discusses).
4. After faith, struggle and deeds are a must to obtain God's grace. (that is what the Apostle James discusses).
5. Till now, anyone who thinks that his deeds are sufficient and boasts about them has fallen in the sin of self-righteousness as the Pharisees. This who does so would ask God to reward him for every deed of his. When he prays, he would want a materialistic comfort from God, and so also when he fasts ... etc. He thinks that through his deeds he could blame God if God allowed a tribulation to occur saying ... "Why is that? I pray and fast!"

**“by grace ye are saved. Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:5,9)**

Does this verse mean that the Salvation is only through the grace without works?

\* If the Apostle Paul said “by grace ye are saved. Not of works” and stopped, works would not be necessary.

\* We notice that the Apostle Paul focuses on faith and grace, whereas St. James focuses on the works without which faith would be dead. What does this mean? Is there any contradiction between them?

\* What do dead faith and alive faith mean in the Book of St. James?

**Let's illustrate all this by taking an example: -**

If I ask you to go to the sea to carry a big man and you don't know anything about buoyancy, you will definitely refuse to do so because of the heavy weight of the man. But for my attempts to convince you, there will be one of two choices for you:

**the first:** - you say “I trust you but I can’t.” **The second:** - you go to the sea. With the second choice, you will find that you are able to carry the man easily because of his buoyancy which really helps carrying him. Let’s see now ...If you come out of water boasting about your strength with which you can carry the big man, those who know the theory of buoyancy will mock you. Won’t they?

Now, let’s understand this examples: -

- **The big man** = the Commandments as the Disciples of Christ said (Acts 15:10).
- **Buoyancy** = God’s invisible grace which supports and helps us. The Spirit helps our infirmities (**Romans 8:26**). This who obliges himself to fulfill the commandments will find it easy as the grace helps. This is the meaning of the Apostle Paul’s saying “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).
- **The first choice** in which the man refuses to go to the water saying “I trust you but I can’t.” = dead faith.
- **The second choice** in which man agrees to go to the water = alive faith ... and that is exactly what St. Peter said to Jesus “at Your word I will let down the net.” (Luke 5:5).
- **Boast** = self-righteousness and pride.
- **People’s mockery at this who boast** = the Devil’s mockery at man who falls in pride when he does a deed.
- **The man’s belief and the fulfilment of what he was asked to do in an obligatory way** = the required struggle and to oblige myself to fulfil the testimony.

Thus, living faith is a decision taken by our own free will to fulfil the commandments, be dead to sin and follow the path of righteousness believing that God’s grace will help us. Therefore, we will find that fulfilling the commandment is easy. Actually, Christ Himself takes up the burden, and so He says “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Living faith is that man obliges himself and fulfils the commandments which he finds them easy to be done. (Romans 10:1-11) + (Hebrews 12:1). So, the Lord says “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Matthew 11:12). But He also says that His burden is light, so those who oblige themselves find that Christ take upon the burden on behalf of them. Notice God’s saying “when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants.” (Luke 17:10), and this to make man avoid boasting since pride goes before destruction. This has always been the thought of the Apostle Paul that God is the Giver, and so, why does man boast while God is

the source of all graces? “Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1st Corinthians 4:7).

**The importance of living faith:** - without faith, there is no salvation. Christ died for us to fulfil the Redemption by His Blood, but there is what we call the worthiness of the Blood. The first stipulation is faith. Then come the Holy Sacraments and man’s struggle. The importance of faith is that man who has believed in Christ gets to know Who Christ is and begins to love Him. Christ is the image of God (Colossians 1:15 + Hebrews 1:3). If one does not know Christ, he would not know God since Christ is the image of God (John 8:19). Living faith makes us ready to fulfil God’s Commandments and present our bodies as a living sacrifice.

**The importance of man’s decision to fulfil God’s testimony**

St. Augustine says “God who created you without you, will not save you without you.”, and concerning the same issue, Christ says “How often I wanted to .. but you were not willing” (Matthew 23:37) and “who desires all men to be saved ...” (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:4). Are all people saved? Certainly not. The Holy Bible says “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Are all people saved and have everlasting life? Certainly not. Thus, it is crucial for man to take a clear decision of being dead to sin and dead to the old nature, and to live according to the new life in Christ.

God is still asking each one **“Do you want to be made well?”**

**Orthodoxy is a center between two deviant thoughts: -**

- **Salvation by only faith without deeds:** - The Apostle Paul says “by grace you are saved.” This is a reply to the Jews and the Judaized who boast their deeds and ask God to reward them.
- **Salvation by deeds without faith:** - Our reply is “if there was righteousness in the Law,” (deeds and fulfilling the Commandments), Christ would have died for no reason.

**Definitions:**

❖ **Grace:**

The Apostle Paul talked about grace as a return of man’s deeds and self-righteousness according to the Jewish thought. The word “grace” is originally a Greek word “Kharisma” which refers to a free gift given by Caesar to his army and his men on his birthday or on the day of his enthronement. It was an expression of the Caesar’s generosity; it wasn’t a reward for a specific work. The Church fathers said **“grace is a free gift, but it is given to those who deserve it; that is to those who struggle.”**

❖ **Justification:**

The Law sentences all those who sin to death, but Christ came to die for us to forgive our sins so as to be reconciled with God. He rose to give us His life so that we can do deeds of righteousness. Our members which have become Christ’s own must be instruments of righteousness to God.

**Forgiveness of sins = freedom**

**Freedom + deeds of righteousness = justification**

❖ **Sanctification: -**

God is the Most Holy and the Spirit sanctifies us to God so as to be saints for Him. Therefore, we say that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Holiness; and all that concerns God is said to be sanctified.

❖ **Dead faith: -**

A person with dead faith is one who thinks that faith is just reciting words without deeds such as “I’m Christian and I believe in Christ Who is my Savior ...” but without deeds. Another person with dead faith is one who says “Christ has redeemed us and has forgiven all of our sins ... and so, I’m saved as a believer whatever I commit sins.

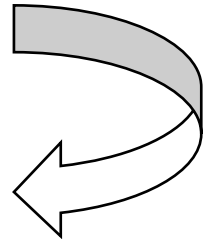
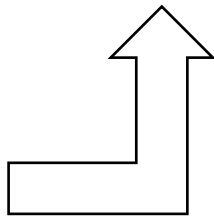
❖ **Living faith: -**

All what has been said previously + doing good deeds to prove this faith. A person who tries to do good deeds, even in an obligatory way, will find help which is God’s grace = a power from the Holy Spirit. This is the teaching of the Apostle Paul “but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.” (Romans 8:13), and we have the same meaning in “and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit.” (Romans 2:29). It is a decision to give up any favorite sins in an obligatory way; and the Spirit helps.

**“if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body.” (Romans 8:13)**

grace which helps

your free will + obligation = struggle



those who struggle gain experience

living faith = obligation + trust in the grace

**Does baptism grant complete mortification of the flesh (the old man)?**

1. The flesh = the desires of the flesh which continues to make troubles even after baptism.
2. Definitely, baptism does not put the flesh to death, otherwise man's freedom will no longer exist.
3. The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (deeds of the flesh) (Galatians 5:16-26) ... but "he gives more grace" (James 4:6). But this is for those who want to follow the Spirit in complete obedience without resistance nor insistence on the sinful path. Such person finds help from the Spirit, and this help is what is called grace.
4. This struggle between the spirit and the flesh will not end till this flesh perishes. So, we say with the Apostle Paul "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24), and we also say with him "we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." (Romans 8:23). For our new sanctified flesh which we will be gifted with in the Kingdom of Heaven, we will never commit sin any more since this is complete adoption (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:9). But till now, graces of the Redemption which we have been gifted with are just an earnest or the first fruits of the everlasting blessings in Heaven (we have **the first fruits of the Spirit** Romans 8:23 + **earnest of the Spirit** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:22 + Which is the **earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession Ephesians 1:14). The redemption of the purchased possession is the redemption of the flesh; that's to say having the glorified body.

### **Is it possible for a believer to perish?**

1. As mentioned before, baptism does not prohibit man's freedom. Whoever wants to follow the path of righteousness by his own free will finds help through grace. On the contrary, whoever wants to satisfy his lusts all his lifetime has his own freedom but he will perish if he insists on committing sins.
2. God's people perished in the wilderness after they had been baptized with Moses in the sea, had eaten the same spiritual food and had drunk the same spiritual drink. This occurred because of their insistence on committing sin (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:1-12).
3. Demas departed and forsook the Apostle Paul as he had loved this present world (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:9). Also, you can review (Hebrews 4:1 + Philippians 3:17-19 + Hebrews 6:4-8 + Romans 11:17-22).

4. It is sufficient to listen to the Apostle Paul saying “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:27).
5. We end by God’s saying “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:5).



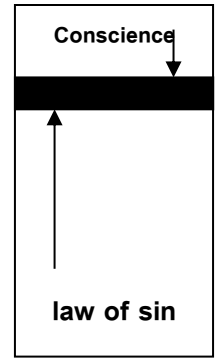
\* **The Christian believer and and the work of grace with him which requires struggle**

\* **Man before Christ and before the Law**

+ conscience is the natural law.

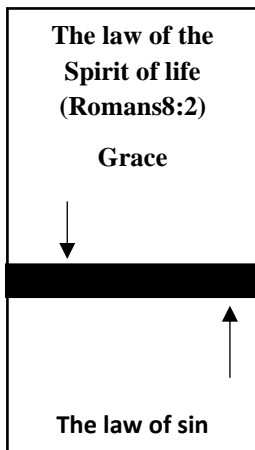
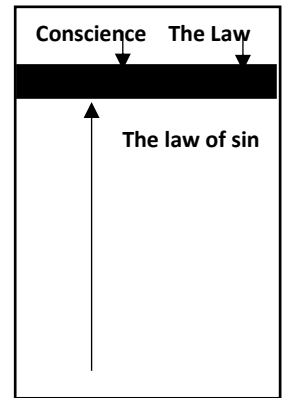
Here we find that the law of sin presses against man.

The conscience resists the fault, but the law of sin has influence the man.

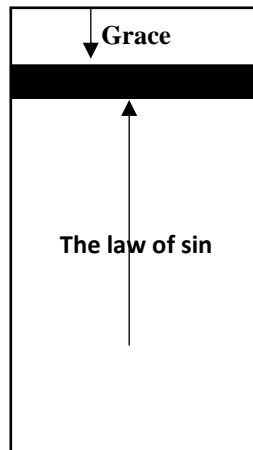


\* **Man during Moses' Law**

+ The Law with its power of discipline and punishment became helpful for the natural law against the law of sin. Thus, the Apostle Paul said that the Law was to discipline man till the Advent of Christ (Romans 3:24) "You gave me the Law as an aid" (The Gregorian Liturgy)

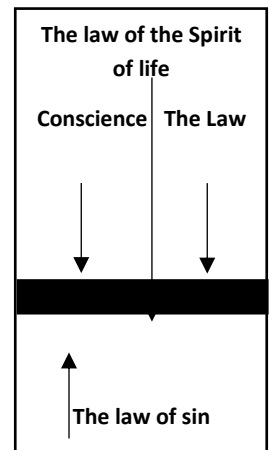


For a person who struggles, we see that God's grace suppresses the law of sin as if he is dead to it completely and his members are dead before it.



We find that a person who does not struggle always complain that sin has extreme power over him.

The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other (Galatians 5:17).

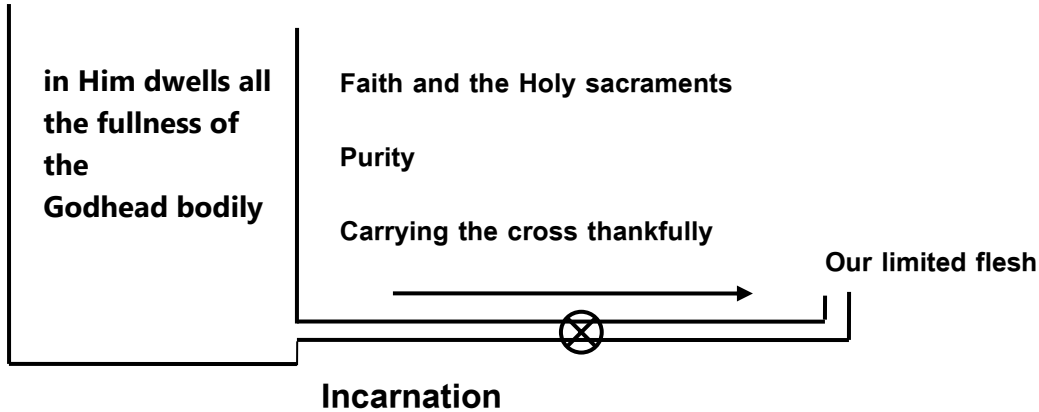


It is through Christ that we are gifted the grace, and it is a mighty power but only given to those who struggle.

\* **The Christian believer**

### In Christ

Unity with Christ: We struggle for this unity here ... but in the Kingdom of Heaven, there will be complete unity. Here, we are called the “bride of Christ”, but there, we will be called the “Lamb’s wife.”

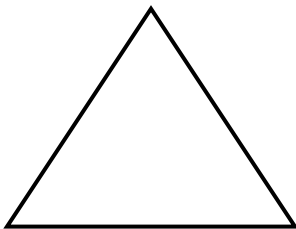


Christ said “Abide in me, and I in you”, so, the Apostle Paul took this verse and made it the basis of the concept of the Salvation. Therefore, the fathers have given the name of “the Apostle Paul’s theology” to the phrase of “in Christ” which he repeated almost in every letter of his. According to the Apostle the Salvation is only for those **who are in Christ**: -

- There is no salvation except in abiding in Christ.
- All righteousness is in Christ.
- Even our peace and love to each other must be in Christ; otherwise, it is betrayal like what Judas did. (1st Corinthians 16:19,24).
- Each one who is in Christ is a saint (with different degrees).

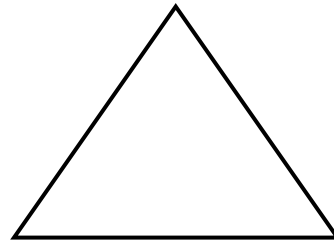
**Abide in me: -**

**Adam, head of the first creation**



The base of the triangle is all human beings sons of Adam

**Christ (the Last Adam, Head of the church)**



The base of the triangle is those who have been in Christ

**All of the human beings are the flesh of Adam: -** Eve is of Adam's flesh and all sons are of both of them too. Thus, all humans are one flesh.

**Baptized believers:** - they are united with Christ as a new creation and become members of His own flesh and of His own bones “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Ephesians 5:30). Each one of us has become a member of this body, and so, every member has his own work given by the Holy Spirit which supports every one with the gifts (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4). We are created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). Notice that in this verse there are two creations of us ... **we are his workmanship** (the first creation) ... **created in Christ** (the second creation). Review (Ephesians 1:1-14). As each member has his own work, this is called integration between the members of the flesh. Christ is the head of the flesh (the church), but anyone who insists on committing sins without repentance will not abide in the flesh (Christ’s flesh) since there is no communion between light and darkness. Therefore, God says “repent” ... (Luke 13:5). Repentance is the first resurrection; and who continues in a life of repentance will have a second resurrection in Glory. **Definitely, it is obvious that all of this due to Christ’s Incarnation.**

We live in Christ through baptism “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:13).

**“and I in you”:** - By baptism we become united with Christ, and we are gifted with His life. This life is everlasting “knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.” (Romans 6:9). This is also for the repentant believer who reckons that he is dead to sin (Romans 6:11). That who says **“I have been crucified with Christ”** (about the desires of sins) ... can say **“Christ lives in me”** (Galatians 2:20), and he can also say **“For to me to live is Christ ...”** (Philippians 1:21).

When we have become in Christ, the Holy Spirit came upon us (Christ’s Spirit). The Holy Spirit makes us abide in Christ, and as long as we abide in Christ we are filled with the Holy Spirit

**What did we receive through uniting and abiding in Christ?**

Review the drawing in the previous page. We unite with Christ through:

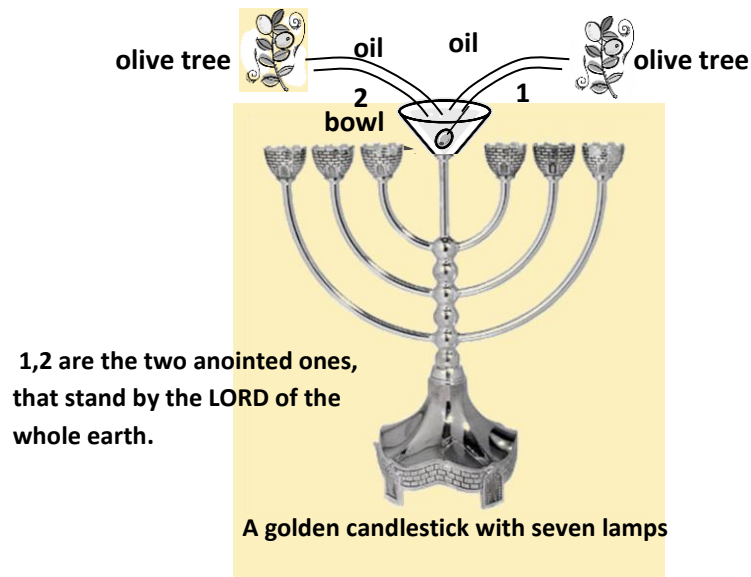
1. Faith and Holy Sacraments
2. Purity
3. Carrying the cross thankfully

Because all the fullness of the Godhead has dwelled in Christ bodily (Colossians 2:9,19), this has been the source of all blessings which we need:

1. Being temples of the Holy Spirit
2. Holiness
3. Spiritual and material blessings
4. Everlasting life

## 5. Sonship

The revelation of Zechariah the prophet (Zechariah 4) in which he saw a candlestick that takes its oil from the bowl upon the top of it for lighting. There are two branches of olive as sources of oil. There is no scope to completely explain the meaning of the revelation, but we say that the candlestick refers to the church which is filled with the Holy Spirit so as to be light for the whole world. The bowl is a symbol for Christ the Head of the church who is filled with the Spirit in His flesh giving the church all of its needs.



### **The concept of the cross and sufferings in Christianity**

1. In spite of all these blessings, there's a cross and sufferings for the believer. The concept of these sufferings has completely changed since the Old Testament. They have no longer become punishment and wrath of God, instead, they have become discipline and suffering with Christ, followed by glorification with Him (Roman 8:17). The Holy Bible tells us about the cross that it is a glory (John 7:37-39). Thus, we have to resemble Christ in His sacrificial love so that we can be His disciples. One who has actually tasted

Christ's love desires to suffer with Him. The Apostle said that it has become a gift (Philippians 1:29).

2. It is said that Christ was made perfect through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10) = to be like us in everything even suffering. Therefore, we are made perfect through sufferings to be like His image (Galatians 4:19), for that who has suffered in the flesh ceases to sin (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:1).
3. Despite all of the Apostle Paul's sufferings (a thorn in the flesh + the resistance of the Jews, the idolaters and even that of the Christians who spread rumors against him and cast doubts on his apostleship and even on him as a trustee of donation money + 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11) we find him disciplining his body, and bringing it into subjection since he has taught that the fruits of the Spirit are for those who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24). God showed him why he had been given a thorn as he was subjected to arrogance because of (the revelations and visions / being caught to the third heaven / people's thinking that he was a god and they wanted to sacrifice for him / doing miracles and resurrecting the dead / everyone's love to him). Thus, sufferings have become remedies: -
  - 1) either to heal from a sickness (example: - Job).
  - or
  - 2) to protect from a sickness (example: - Paul). **You have bound me with all the remedies that lead to life.** This does not mean that sufferings forgive sins, but it is only **Christ's blood** that does so. Hunger made the prodigal son come back to repent and so his sins were forgiven. St. Paul delivered the adulterer of Corinth to Satan to harm his flesh to save his spirit (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:5). St. Paul also said that though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:16).
4. He who cannot crucify his desires and lusts is given a cross from God so as not to be attracted to the world.
5. The Lord of Glory says "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light..." (Matthew 11:30). He knows that "In the world we shall have tribulation but He has overcome the world (John 16:33). This means = abide in Me as I am He who actually carries the burden (whether it is a cross or fulfilling the commandments). Moreover, we see the splendor of the image of the Holy Bible saying "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." meaning that He embraces the sufferer. God will not let us suffer to be tempted above that we are able; but with the temptation He will also make a way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). As Christ has overcome the world, thus, we can bear and overcome tribulations as long as we live in Him. We can do

so not by escaping from tribulations but it is Christ Whom we live in that will bear with us so we get comfort and relief (the three youth in the furnace), and that is victory in Christianity.

## The path to justification, sanctification and glorification:

Here we move to be witnesses of God and see Him

The Resurrection and getting the resurrected body (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:43)

**This is the glory** which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18)

mortification of the flesh (Romans 7:24)

That in whom God lives, this is the glorified (Zechariah 2:5), but what we have now from glory is invisible.

One who is sanctified becomes an abode of the Trinity (John 14:23) +

(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3: 16).

**Sanctification** means to be devoted to God and our members work for the Glory of His name.

The more we walk in the path of **justification**, the more our members become dead to sin

Thus, they no longer become instruments of sin but are devoted to God as instruments of righteousness. (Romans 6:13).

### Justification is the path to sanctification

Through this we fulfill "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians 2:20).

The Spirit gifts the believer from the righteousness of Christ and His life (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21).

The Spirit renews the world of righteousness (John 16:8). That means that the

Spirit convinces man to do positive deeds of righteousness.

The work of the Holy Spirit (the grace) gives the believer a power to crucify his desires

and lusts sharing Christ in His Crucifixion.

The Holy Spirit convinces the Christian of how corrupted is the path of sin (Jeremiah 20:7).

The Spirit renews the world of sin (John 16:8), then comes the Sacrament of Confession.

By baptism we become sons of God, and then, by the Chrism the Holy Spirit comes upon us.

By baptism our sins are forgiven, and so man becomes freed from sin (Romans 6:7) since Christ has paid the price.

The second step is baptism which is death and resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:3-8).

The entrance to justification is faith "being justified by faith," (Romans 5:1).

**Justification, sanctification and glorification occur at the same time, not as shown in the drawing since it is only for explanation.**

(2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:18)

The path of justification

## **What is Salvation?**

God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26), but by sin this first creation was corrupted and sin has dwelled inside us (Romans 7:20 + Psalms 51:5). Therefore, we were not able to see God because of that (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15: 1, 5 + Exodus 33:20). Christ has fulfilled the Redemption and paid the price of our sins, and in addition, He made us live in Him as new creation (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17). It is through this new creation that we are saved (Galatians 6:15). The path to all of these blessings is faith and then baptism ...look at the previous drawing ... then, it ends with glorification and everlasting joy in Heaven. Truly, we have lost the Paradise and are dead by sin ... but Christ's grace miraculously surpassed what we had first lost. We are gifted with a glorified body which never dies nor sins. We had lost a garden but we won a place in God's throne (Revelation 3:21). The Apostle summarized this and said "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift" (Romans 5:15).

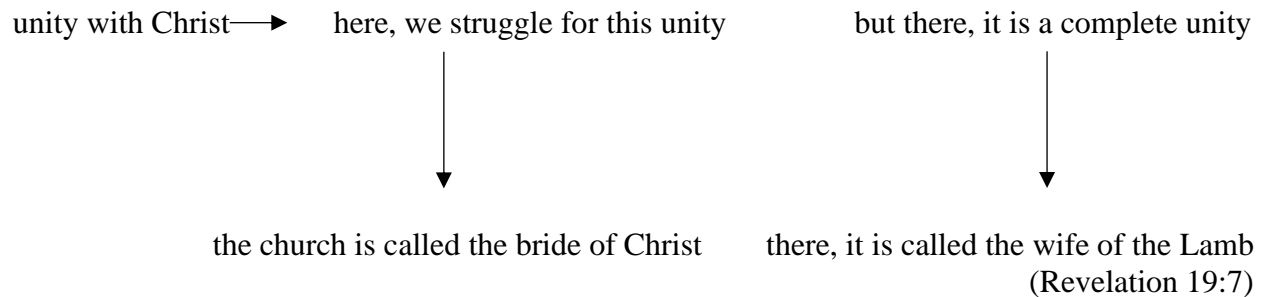
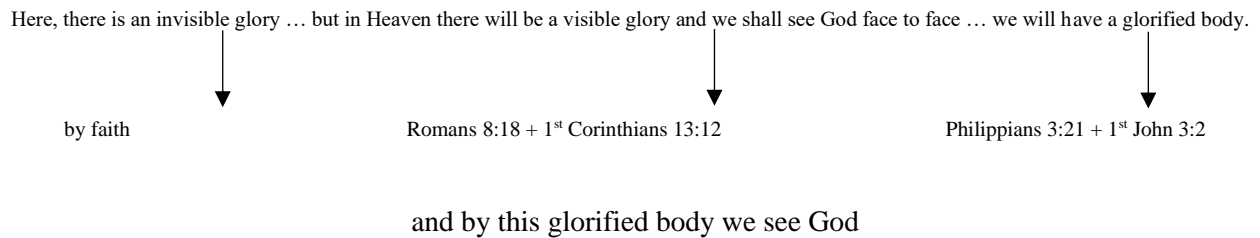
## **Thus, salvation which is the blessings of the Redemption means: -**

1. Forgiveness of our previous sins through Christ's blood = we were reconciled to God by His death (Romans 5:10) and by the death of the old nature, that is the old man (Romans 3:4,5). We are gifted with a new nature by Christ Who lives in us (Philippians 1:21), and Christ lives in us eternally. When we die bodily we become like a seed which is buried to produce fruit. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:35-38) + (Romans 6:9).
2. We are able to do works of righteousness by the power of Christ Who lives in us as He uses our members as instruments of righteousness (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 + Romans 6:13).
3. We have become Christ's flesh and bones (Ephesians 5:30), and by uniting with Him as the Son of God, we have become God's sons (Matthew 6:9 + Romans 3:5). And the son gets the inheritance (Romans 8:17 + John 17:22).
4. As Adam was in the garden loving God, he was in delight (Eden = delight), but by sin we lost that. Satan has deceived us that sensual pleasure is delight, but by the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon man we have regained our first condition in Paradise since He have gifted us with God's love in our hearts. Therefore, the fruit of the Spirit is (love, joy ... ) (Galatians 5:22,23). All what we have been gifted with is just an earnest of what we will be granted in heaven, where there will be a glorious unspeakable everlasting joy (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:8). God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and there will be no thirst nor hunger (Revelation). There, God's adoption to us will be completed (Romans 8:23) ... Christ has fulfilled the Redemption, but we will fully benefit from all of the Redemption graces in Heaven. There, the Lamb shall



lead us into living fountains of waters (Revelation 7:17), but here, we have only taken the earnest of the Spirit.

5. As long as the Trinity lives in us, then, we live in an invisible and undeclared glory (review the drawing in the previous page).



6. The church has become one flesh as a bride of Christ. Each member of us is given a specific gift by the Holy Spirit to establish the church. We will be resurrected as one flesh and arise to Heaven where Christ was the first and the forerunner to enter for us (Hebrews 6:18-20). That is what we pray in the Gregorian Liturgy “You have brought my first fruit up to heaven.” = “I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2).
7. That who abides in Christ will be accounted as perfect, without blame and no condemnation (Colossians 1:28 + Ephesians 1:4 + Romans 8:1), who abides in Christ? Those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit without resistance (Romans 8:1). We will discuss the verse in due course. This is the meaning of what had been written in the Book of Song of Solomon when the bridegroom said to his bride **“My dove, my undefiled is but one.”** As doves always come back to its home, so does God’s son if he goes far by sin, but then, he returns back through repentance for he shall be accounted perfect since he came back like a dove (as it came back home *Hebrews 3:6*, we are His house), and perfect (because it is in Christ).

8. Bodily death no longer has dominion nor a thorn since it cannot prohibit us from living eternally (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:55). This thorn still hurts and causes pain but without causing eternal death. Therefore, death is still an enemy because we mourn the departure of our beloved who fall asleep but not as others who have no hope (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13), and as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:10). This is the work of the Spirit the Comforter ... tears from outside but comfort is inside (John 15:26).
9. The pain and the cross occurred so we can be perfected, but there is comfort. Generally, the cross is a must for every believer for all those who want to be godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:12). God who takes out sweetness from the strong made these sufferings our path to Heaven (review 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:13 + 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:3-7).
10. The Holy Spirit has dwelled in us helping to fulfil the commandments and to abide in Christ. In addition, He has become a participator with us in every good deed (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:16 + 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:14 + 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:21).
11. The love of God is poured in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). This love turns to joy (Galatians 5:22), and whoever loves God, his stony heart turns to a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19). If a man loves God, he will keep His commandments (John 14:23). This is the meaning that God's commandments have been written in our hearts (this has been done by love) (Hebrews 8:10). A man like this is in no need for the law (Galatians 5:23). Because our hearts were stony, the Commandments had been written on stony tablets, and by love, they were written in our hearts. This does not mean that we void the Law but to establish it (Romans 3:31), why?
  - It is a guide for us since it is the word of God, and this shall never pass away.
  - It guides us to Christ and shows our need to Him Who helps us.
  - It is a means of clarification of the New Testament (for example, the wars are explanation of the wars against the devil." The prophecies about Christ proves both the truth of the Holy Bible and God's love through His everlasting plan in the Redemption.
  - The love of God which prohibits us from committing sins is of a high rank. Thus, we walk step by step to reach the perfect love.
  - The ethical commandments were not voided. Only the rituals were voided since they were symbols for Christ.
  - The fathers said that we can find the New Testament in the Old, and they also said that the Jews were the librarians of Christianity by

keeping the Law. All through the stories of the Old Testament we can see how God dealt with His people and He never changes. These dealings are the same as God's with us "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." + "with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." (Hebrews 13:8 + James 1:17).

12. Christ has united His church into one flesh and has made it a bride for Him, and He has even gathered together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him (Ephesians 1:10,22,23 + 4:1-6) + (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12). When the church gathers together as one flesh in love, the Holy Spirit poured upon it (Psalms 133), and the Spirit makes it established in Christ and takes it to the bosom of the Father (the image of church building). The Holy Spirit cries in us "Abba, Father" to make us feel God's adoption.
13. **And He has raised us up together** (from the death of sin) and has given us a heavenly life while we are still in flesh = **and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus** (Ephesians 2:6). This is the meaning of "He bowed the heavens also and came down" (Psalms 18:9). Didn't the Lord say that for where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20), and where Christ is, the place becomes a heaven.
14. Saint Peter says that **we have become partakers of the divine nature** (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:4), and the Apostle Paul says that about **Christ: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him"** (Colossians 2:9,10), so, what does this mean? Are we filled with the Divinity of Christ?! God forbid ... absolutely no. We are created limited bodies and will not be gods. But, it is by the Incarnation of Christ, our unity with Him through the Baptism and abiding in Him, that Christ has become the source of all what we need as God's Divinity has dwelled in His flesh. He fills us to the extent of our measure with all of the blessings which we need. For that, the Apostle says "**all the fullness of God.**" (Ephesians 3:19). Let's consider this ... imagine that there is a very huge tank and at the bottom of this tank there is a pipe connected to a small bowl (review the drawing under the title of in Christ). We find that the bowl is filled to its limited capacity from what is in the tank. The huge tank is Christ's flesh in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, and the small bowl is me and you, and we are connected with Him by the Incarnation of Christ, by Baptism (and of course by the rest of the Holy Sacraments).

What divine blessings are we gifted with through this unity?

- **An eternal life:** - We say what if a man deposited some money in a bank so that he could earn his living from the return of that money, would the bank with all of its money, possessions and employees be his own under the pretense that he became a partner in the capital of the bank? Absolutely not, but he just takes what he deserves. “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:57).
- **Holiness:** - It is by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, by Christ’s blood and by the foreknowledge of God (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:2). The Apostle Paul called the believers as saints (Romans 1:7). Let’s take an example: - We let the sun get into our houses to clean and purify any microbes. Do we bring in the sun disk itself? And where is that house that can hold this planet or bear its heat? All what we need is a beam of sunlight, and that is enough to purify the room. A beam is coming out of the sun = the Son begotten of the Father = Light out of Light.
- **Glory:** - Christ was glorified in flesh (John 17:5) so as to give us this glory (John 17:22). Christ has been appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2) to make us heirs of God (Romans 8:17). The question is ... Do we have the same glory of His? God forbid. Absolutely no. Christ has the same glory of God = sits at the right hand of His Father = “and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:21). As for us, each one will be rendered according to his deeds = To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne = My glory will be reflected upon him according to his condition. “For one star different from another star in glory.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:41). Christ has the glory in Himself, but as for us, we shall reflect this glory when we see Him as He is. (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:2).
- **Freedom:** - If the Son therefore shall make you free ... (John 8:36)
- **The Holy Spirit dwelling:** - The Holy Spirit participates with us in every deed and gives grace to support us. He renews our nature and gives us gifts and fruits ...etc. And every blessing we need.

## **The Letter to the Romans**

### **Who was the Letter written to?**

- In Rome, there were about sixteen thousand Jews. Then, came those who believed and were baptized on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. These were the seeds. In addition, they were affected by those coming from here and there who witnessed for Christ since Rome is an open city.
- It was written in 57 AD, that was about twenty-two years after Peter's exhortation. The Holy Spirit has worked exceedingly in the first church.
- Paul has preached in Turkey and Greece where there was exchangeable trade between them and Rome.
- Claudius Caesar expelled all Jews from Rome. Some of them believed at the hands of Paul and they came back as believers.
- No one of the Apostles nor Peter was preaching at the time of writing this Letter.
- Peter was not in Rome and what proves that is when Paul said that he wants to go there to give them a spiritual gift and he is ready to preach there. Thus, is it appropriate for Paul to say that while Peter was there at the same time? Moreover, Paul says that he does not establish on another one's basis, even in sending greetings to those whom he knows there he did not mention Peter.

### **The Christians of Rome were of two divisions: -**

1. **From gentile origins:** - They despised the Jews ... and looked at them as denying people to whom God shut the door and opened it to them instead.

**This was a reaction to the Jews' attitude**

**since the Jews were despising the Gentiles.**

2. **From Jewish origins:** - They felt privileged as sons of Abraham and because they received the Law, and they are God's chosen people. All this gave them a feeling of pride and arrogance. This feeling became engrained in them.

**In the Letter Paul criticized both of them and he showed how all people are in need of Christ = salvation is for all of the world ... and he asked all to love.**

# Chapter One

**Verse (1): "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God"**

**Paul** = is a Latin word meaning small, as it was a custom of the Hebrews to name a person with two names. Paul was also called Saul, which means requested from God. Augustine says that Paul was thin and short statured. He preferred to use the name Paul out of humility and indicating that he was the least of the apostles.

**A bondservant of Jesus Christ** = Jewish teachers used to boast titles like my lord or my teacher, and Jews generally boast about their Jewishness, and Gentiles about their philosophies, but Paul teaches them that he is proud to be a servant of Christ. And if everyone is a servant of Christ, why should a Jew boast over a Gentile or a Gentile over a Jew? He is a servant of Christ because Christ redeemed him and bought him with his blood and freed him from captivity and became his possession. We understand that servitude to Christ is liberating, and a person cannot truly be a servant of Christ unless he experiences true freedom at the same time. A servant of Christ is not enslaved to any other human being or even to his own bodily desires, and no one can prevent him from fulfilling his duty, no specific habit controls him, and the world cannot tempt him with its allurements or draw him to it. He lives on earth as a heavenly man, and after being a slave to sin, he became a priest and king. He lives in the flesh but walks in the spirit as a servant to Jesus Christ. This is what made even the brothers of Christ in the flesh proud to be his servants, and they did not boast about being his relatives in the flesh (Jude 1 & James 1:1). So Paul, after Christ appeared to him on the road, felt that he became wholly dedicated to Jesus Christ with all his heart, soul, and body.

**Called to be an apostle** = as if he had no merit in his faith or his apostleship, but it is a call from God. He calls himself an apostle like the twelve. The importance of this phrase is particularly evident in the letters of those who tried to deny Paul's apostolic right to serve, thereby questioning his teachings. Paul was compelled to prove that he was sent by God to validate his teachings to affirm the believers.

**Separated to the gospel** = Separated means Presi in Aramaic, from which comes Pharisee, meaning chosen or appointed. This means that Paul moved from his Jewish Pharisaism to another Pharisaism by the grace of God, the Pharisaism of the gospel, meaning that God chose and separated him to preach the gospel. The Jewish Pharisees were separated for the study of the Law, and the word Pharisee corresponds to a doctorate in theology. Paul was one of these Pharisees. And God, with his foreknowledge, separated him and appointed him to preach the gospel. His discipleship to Gamaliel was a kind of preparation, but God had already separated him from the womb (Gal 1:15 + Acts 13:2 + Jeremiah 1:4-5) **for the gospel of God** = Gospel means joyful news. Here he says the gospel of God. In other places, he says the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in (Romans 1:9) he says the gospel of His Son. God is the source of salvation through Jesus Christ, the essence of the gospel or the essence of the joyful news is in the coming of the Lord Jesus and his redemption for humanity. God has, since ancient times, prepared a joyful salvation program for humans that was fulfilled by the coming of Christ, to him be the glory.

And Saint Ambrose noted that the name of Christ in this verse was used by the apostle before the name of God in order, and used this in response to Arius that God and Christ are equal. This is also evident from the fact that the gospel is the gospel of God and the gospel of his Son at the same time (Verse 1 and Verse 9).

**Verse (2): "which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures"**

The Holy Scripture is inspired by God. And this preaching of salvation was previously promised by God in the Old Testament through the prophets. Before God does great works, He prepares for them a long time in advance. This, in addition to the prophets' prophecies about salvation through Christ, points to the fact that this salvation is an eternal plan, and that God has prepared the salvation of humans since eternity. Here, Paul reassures his listeners that the gospel he preaches has had its foundations laid from the beginning. And Paul's preaching does not contradict the Jewish Holy Scriptures but rather interprets and explains them.

**Verse (3): "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh"**

**Concerning His Son** = This is referring back to the previous verse, the promises of the prophets were about Christ.

**His Son, who was born of the seed of David** = and compare with (Romans 8:3) to see the pre-existence of the Son before the incarnation. In the word "His Son", it is preceded by a definite article in the original Greek, indicating Christ's unique and only Sonship, which is by nature and not by adoption like us. This eternal Son, who is the Son of God, became a son of man = **according to the flesh** = so Christ has two sonships, a sonship to God and a sonship to man, He is the Son of God and the Son of Man. **Descended from David** = The Virgin Mary is descended from David. And it was said about Christ that he is from the seed of David (Rev 22:16). **Who was born** = He took on a new state in addition to His own, His divinity united with His humanity, like the union of iron with fire, but His divinity was not affected and did not turn into humanity, and His humanity was a complete humanity, like us in all things except sin alone. He transitioned from the state of the invisible Son of God (in His divinity) to the state of the visible Son of God in the flesh. And He appeared to people as just an ordinary human. When He took on a body, His divinity was hidden, but His divinity remained complete without increase or decrease, for He is completely perfect because He is all-in-all. But by His resurrection, it was revealed that He is the Son of God. And as a human, He was from the lineage of King David.

**Verse (4): "and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."**

**Declared** = This means that what was hidden became apparent. This does not mean that He later became the Son of God. Rather, His Sonship to God was revealed to us and His resurrection from the dead testified to it with supernatural power. The word "declared" means it became clear that, appeared, was testified for, was acknowledged as, was recognized as, was confirmed that

He is the Son of God.

**With power** = The declaration of Christ's Sonship to God and the affirmation of His divinity came with power = because the resurrection was with power. **By the resurrection from the**

**dead** = The resurrection from the dead and the victory over death is a very powerful act.

**According to the Spirit of holiness** = The Spirit of holiness is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not the one who raised Christ, because Christ's divinity was united with His humanity, and what raised Him was His divinity. So why did he say **the Spirit of holiness**? This means that the reason for Christ's resurrection is His victory over sin since He was without sin. Sin brings death, and because Christ was without sin "Who among you convicts Me of sin?" and because He triumphed over Satan in His battles and because He said, "the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me", therefore He triumphed over death because of His holiness. Christ, while on earth, His divinity was hidden in His humanity, and His divinity did not appear except in His victory over death and Hell, which He opened and brought out the souls of the righteous from. So, His saying "**the Spirit of holiness**" indicates that what raised Christ was His divinity, but this is due to Christ's holiness in the flesh and the word "**declared**" here is in contrast to the word "who was born" in the previous verse. So "who was born" refers to the form and shape in which He appeared to us, and "**declared**" refers to His reality that appeared and was revealed to us when He triumphed over death. So, we knew who He is, and that He is the Son of God.

**Verse (5): "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name"**

**Through Him, for His name** = compare with (Ephesians 1:5-6 & Ephesians 1:12). Through Him = We do not receive anything from the Father except for the sake of Christ. Therefore, Christ asks us to ask the Father in His name (John 16:24 & 26). That's why the Church adds to the Lord's Prayer "through Christ Jesus our Lord" because we cannot be accepted before the Father, nor our requests be accepted, except through Christ or more precisely in Christ. The meaning of the Apostle's words here is that he took what he took from salvation and apostleship through Christ. And what is the goal? **For His name** = that is, what we have taken, let us work with it and trade with it for the glory of His name. And what did Apostle Paul take? Grace and apostleship = **Grace** (refer to the introduction) and **Apostleship** = that is, his mission as an apostle to the nations.

**Grace** = Here Paul is referring to the work of grace in him that transformed him from a persecutor of the church to a Christian who received salvation, and even to an apostle. God called him while his hands were stained with blood to change his nature so that he becomes a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). And his work as an apostle was for the nations to obey the faith: **for obedience to the faith** = We see Paul, who feels the grace of God that changed him, wants God to also change the nations so that they would believe and obey God.

**Obedience to the faith** = means that we must accept the issues of faith and its truths with all submission, the truths of faith are inspired matters and are not subject to intellectual discussions, we must subject the mind to God's declarations through prayer, that is, we let the spirit lead the mind, and do not let the mind work separately from the spirit, so it does not err.

**Among all nations** = The message is for all nations without exception.



**Verse (6): "among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ"**

And among these nations, you, the people of Rome, are also called to be among Christ's own. There is no merit in this call, but it is the free grace of God that if anyone accepts, they will believe in Christ. And this grace is through Him and for His name's sake (verse 5).

**Verse (7): "To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."**

**Called to be saints** = For Paul, Christianity is about holiness, and faith in Christ is sanctification, and believers in Christ are saints, that is, separated from the world to be attached to God, and to be dedicated to Him. They have received the Spirit of God to help them in this, and to live in piety, purity, and a worshipful heart. Holiness is a ladder that we climb, not everyone has reached perfection, but holiness has different levels. His saying **called** = Then they are like him, for he is also called (verse 1). But each of us has a different task. He takes pride in serving the beloved of God who are called.

**Grace to you and peace** = The word grace is a greeting of the Greeks, and the word peace is a greeting of the Jews, so he is writing to both. However, in another sense, grace is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, the result of which is peace, so grace precedes peace (Romans 1:5). Grace is generally the merciful deeds of God, redemption and sending of the Holy Spirit, and all the good that God has given us. The greatest good is the sending of the Holy Spirit, and from God's grace is the forgiveness of our sins and granting us the status of sonship. **From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** = This refers to the equality of the Father and the Son, as grace and peace come from both. Saying that God sends grace and peace, and the Son also sends grace and peace, does not mean that they are separate, but the Father and the Son are one. But God the Father wants to send grace and peace, and the one who implemented this is the Son through His redemption. So, the Son sent grace and peace by implementing the will of the Father.

**Verse (8): "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."**

The Apostle begins with the positive side to encourage them, here he is praising their faith before starting the attack. Paul had not seen them, but he rejoiced at the growth of the church everywhere, so we should pray for the growth of the church and the spread of the gospel. And let's learn from Paul to always start with gratitude for what God gives us, and what he gives of good to others as if he gave it to us. **My God** = It's very beautiful to say, "my God". This is like "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." He feels the special relationship that binds him to God, He is my God and has possessed me, and I am His servant who feels His love, so I submit myself to Him as a servant for my trust in His love. And God responds in turn and says I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

**Through Jesus Christ** = For we are not accepted before the Father except through Christ, His pleasure.

**Your faith** = They have faith, but we will see that Paul wants to correct their concepts and save

them from the teachings of the law. But it is clear that their faith has spread throughout the world.

**Verse (9): "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers"**

**Whom I serve with my spirit** = Compare this with the apostle's statement "your reasonable worship" (Romans 12:1). Since we hear here about worship in the spirit, it implies that there is certainly worship in the flesh. This is the worship of rituals and obligations, mere practices without the heart. It is like someone who fasts and boasts in front of people or even to himself that he fasts more than everyone else. The same goes for his Metonias and prayers. But such a person's left hand knows what his right hand is doing. The danger of this type of worship is that if this person encounters a trial, he quickly blames God for allowing it and does not mention his service, worship, fasting, and prayers. This is what Paul the apostle experienced in his Judaism (as this was the way of the Pharisees in worship) and it did not satisfy him or give him joy and peace.

As for worship in the spirit, it is worship led by the Spirit, which is worship in the heart, not visible to people, without appearances or claims, but in contrition of the heart and submission to the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not force anyone to do anything, but He convinces the believing person intellectually in all that he will do in his worship (that's why it was called reasonable service in Romans 12:1). In this way, worship is by freedom of will, that is, with our full freedom, our will, and our choice, wholeheartedly and with all desire and longing. The person puts all his spiritual, psychological, and physical energies in the service of God, and the Spirit leads everything, and the person dedicates everything to God.

For example, the Spirit opens the believer's eyes to the image of the crucified Christ and convinces the believer, saying, "Do you enjoy delicious food while Christ is suffering because of your sins and the sins of all humans and the pains of all humans?" Here the person fasts not to boast but to share with Christ in His pain. Here he is like a mother who refuses to eat because of her son's illness, out of love, not hoping for a reward she will receive from him. Therefore, whoever offers this kind of worship, will not demand God when he is in a trial, to lift the trial from him, reminding God of his deeds and fasts... For whoever worships in the spirit offers his worship to God out of love, not hoping for a reward. Such a person enjoys his worship and is satisfied with it, for love is satisfying. The same goes for prayer, the person starts by forcing himself (struggle), then grace begins its work, and the person enjoys his prayer. But in the stage of coercion (when he was forcing himself to pray), the believer hears the voice of the Holy Spirit, declaring to him the love of Christ for him. Christ has given for you shouldn't you stand for prayer and rejoice God's heart with you? If he responded and was convinced by the voice of the Holy Spirit, he would find pleasure in his prayer. If he was enjoying his prayers, would he ask God for a reward when God has given him this pleasure? Notice that Paul the Apostle in his Christianity experienced this type of worship, he experienced the joy and peace that surpasses all understanding. Indeed, the Holy Spirit in this type of worship gives the believer to feel the feelings and sensations of God's love, to reciprocate love with love, and perhaps he does not find words to express this love that filled his heart, he just sighs (Romans 8:26). Worship in the spirit is not necessarily by the tongue only, but in deep partnership with God, it is uninterrupted partnership in accordance with the apostle's saying "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians

5:17). It is a partnership in wakefulness, and it is also in sleep "I sleep, but my heart is awake" (Song of Solomon 5:2). It is at home and in the church, at work and on the way. But from the story of Elijah (1 Kings 19:12-13) we hear that Elijah listened to the voice of God in silence. So how do we hear the voice of God amidst the noise of the world (Song of Solomon 3:2)? \*We need to have a quiet stop in the bedroom every day, in prayer and in contemplation of the book so that we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit within us. And how can we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit while we are immersed in sins that close our spiritual senses? Only the pure in heart have the possibility of seeing God and hearing His voice (Matthew 5:8). So, we won't hear the voice of the Spirit inside us \*unless we first repent. And how can we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit if we talk all the time in our prayers? \*So, we need to be silent for some time to give the Holy Spirit a chance to speak. \*And our ears' sensitivity increases over time, and sensitivity is lost if we resist the voice of the Holy Spirit, \*and sensitivity increases when we submit to His voice.

And if we listen to His voice, He gives us intellectual conviction. Therefore, worship in the spirit is a rational worship.

Those who offer worship in the flesh see themselves as perfect, as they do this and that. But those who offer worship in the spirit, the Holy Spirit opens their eyes to their sins and their unworthiness, so the apostle Paul says, "sinners, of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15). While we find those who offer worship in the flesh blame God if they encounter a trial, we find those who worship God in the spirit, if a trial comes upon them, say that they deserve this and more, because they see their sins. In fact, they will feel joy because as long as God disciplines them, then He loves them (Hebrews 12:6). In fact, if good comes to them, they feel that they do not deserve it, as Peter cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8), feeling that he is a sinner who does not deserve all these blessings.

**Without ceasing I make mention of you** = The one who prays in the spirit is not concerned about himself but is preoccupied with the pains and salvation of others. He gives thanks for the repentance of someone, and weeps for the sin of someone else, because he will perish because of it, and cries out for the healing of someone else. He asks for peace for the troubled and suffering world. Such a person will resemble God in caring for people.

**In the gospel of His Son** = This worship in the spirit also manifests in my preaching, my service, and my evangelism of the gospel of Christ.

**Verse (10): "making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you."**

He feels a responsibility towards Rome, for God has made him an apostle to the Gentiles. He is afraid for the church from the Jews. But let's learn that not everything we want aligns with God's plans. The Holy Spirit was leading the Apostle "When they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So, passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" (Acts 16: 6-9) + (Romans 1:13 + Romans 15:23).

**Verse (11): "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established"**

**"I may impart to you some spiritual gift"** = Question... If Peter had been in Rome for 16 years and had established its chair as the Catholic brothers say, would it be correct for Paul to say this and where is Peter? And why doesn't Peter give them this gift?

The gift that Paul wants to give is a spiritual gift = because it is from the work of the Holy Spirit, it is to establish them in the correct faith and keep them away from Judaism, and it is also the apostolic blessing.

**Verse (12): "that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."**

Here we notice the delicacy and humility of the Apostle Paul, as he shows here his need for them, and that he will be comforted by their faith. And how can he be comforted by their incorrect faith? This is because they are believers who loved Christ and are zealous for their faith, and this is what comforts him, i.e., their zeal, but their faith needs correction. And when he explains to them, he is comforted, for the one who waters is also watered (Proverbs 11:25). And they will be comforted, meaning they will rejoice in his correct faith when they understand it. But we notice here that the Apostle says that their faith is different from his faith, for they received their faith from Christians of Jewish origin and influenced by their Judaism. Therefore, in Romans 1:15, he says that he is ready to evangelize them, i.e., to correct their faith. So even the Gentiles among them received faith at the hands of Jews, and he wants to correct the faith and eliminate what is Judaized in it, like the necessity of circumcision for salvation.. etc.

**Verse (13): "Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles."**

The Apostle does not want easy service, but he wants to go and correct their faith for them. And let's notice that we often ask for good requests, as the Apostle requested here, and God postpones the response to a suitable time that God sees (he called this the fullness of time). **Fruit** = Wherever evil increases, the Apostle wants to go to have fruit, i.e., believers with correct faith, and this is to declare the power of the gospel more.

**Verse (14): "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise."**

The Apostle feels that God has entrusted him with a mission and has given him a grace for the sake of all nations, and he felt that this is a responsibility on his shoulders that he wishes to settle his account with them by making them believe. He felt that there was a debt on him:

1. He appreciates the greatness of what he has taken from blessings and that he has become indebted to God. And he wants to return the favor to God, who gave him all this, but how? Let this be by evangelizing people, for God's will is for everyone to be saved.

2. For his love for all people and his longing for their salvation.  
3. He feels that he doesn't deserve what he took, as he feels the ugliness of his past and yet he received many blessings. Therefore, he felt a kind of commitment towards those who did not taste his freedom in Christ and the glory he took. So, he said "for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). **The barbarians** = Greeks and Romans believed that they were the wise and the rest of the people were barbarians. In general, anyone who tastes feels that he wants everyone to taste. In fact, he feels sad if anyone is deprived of God's grace "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?"

**Verse (15): "So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also."**

**As much as is in me**: meaning that I am tasked with this, and in other translations "I am eager to preach to you" and to preach the gospel among the nations, "**as much as is in me**" means this is the work for which God created me. "**You who are in Rome**" = he wants to evangelize (preach) in Rome, the center of paganism and sin, and is ready to bear any pain for that. "**also**" = it is an expression that refers to the difficulty of preaching in Rome, which glorifies power, and he will go to preach about a crucified carpenter, which is the death of slaves who committed the most heinous crimes, one of the Roman philosophers said: "I wish that the idea of crucifixion would never come to the mind of a noble Roman man.

**To preach to you** = Their faith needs a radical review because of the Jewish traditions that entered their faith. And because of his sense of obligation towards them (because of his feelings that he is indebted to them verse 14), he is ready to go to them.

**Verse (16): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."**

**I am not ashamed** = He said in Galatians, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Galatians 6:14). The message here is directed to the Romans, the richest and greatest nation in the world. They, in Rome, take pride in power and greatness and live in vanity and pride. But Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, which seems weak in its appearance, he is not ashamed to preach that a carpenter died crucified between two thieves, which is disgusting to the Romans, and perhaps the Christians of Rome felt ashamed of this idea, feeling the vanity of being inhabitants of the mighty Rome, the mistress of the world, and the apostle wanted to break their vanity, so he said: "**I am not ashamed**". He is not ashamed because he feels the power of God's work. As for the people of Galatia, they are miserable and in humiliation, so he says to them, I boast. Generally, the path that starts with "I am not ashamed" ends with "I boast". If someone asked me ... do you worship the crucified? I say yes, this cross is a sign of his infinite divine love for me and his care for me.

**For it is the power of God unto salvation** = He is not ashamed of the gospel of God because he feels the power of this gospel. The gospel is not a theoretical message or an intellectual philosophy of education, but it is a mighty divine work, and a continuous divine love movement to bring man into the company of divine glory. It is a power that the Apostle Paul feels, and

every believer will feel. It is a power whose domain is the salvation of man, a power that works in thought, will, soul, feeling, and body. With one sermon from Peter, 3000 people believed because the word has a mighty power that changed the Roman state itself to Christianity. So, the Gospel is based on a major process of change by Christ, it gives salvation and grants it to those who believe in Christ. **To the Jew first** = Only temporally, as the Jews were the first in their association with God. They received the promises of salvation and were entrusted with the law of God first. The service of Christ began with them, and so did the service of the apostles begin with them and then the invitation reached the whole world. Therefore, they have more duties and no favoritism, they must believe in Christ first, and then they should preach to the nations. **Then for the Greek:** The nations are also invited.

**Verse (17): "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"**

**In it the righteousness of God is revealed** = This Gospel that I preach is the power of God for salvation (verse 16), and how does it save? It does so by making the believer righteous. Can every believer become righteous? Absolutely, for the work of God's grace, which justifies, is a very powerful work. God gives to the baptized believer and the anointed with the oil of Mayron (the sacrament of chrismation), for the Holy Spirit to dwell upon him, who has a mighty power in changing the life of the believer, from a life of sin to a life of righteousness, and the transformation of Saul of Tarsus himself into the Apostle Paul is the best witness to this (see the meaning of justification in the introduction). And we should understand that we, as believers, must force ourselves to do righteousness (positive struggle) and grace gives us to enjoy and comfort in doing righteousness. And note that we become righteous by the life of Christ in us. And notice that the righteousness of the law was "do and you shall live", whereas in Christianity, justification begins with faith in Christ, so there is no righteousness outside of faith in Christ. After faith, comes the role of baptism, in which we die and rise with Christ to His life. After that comes the role of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which establishes us in Christ (the sacrament of chrismation), and as much as we are established in Christ, we grow in righteousness. We are established in Christ as much as we crucify ourselves with Christ and struggle (negative struggle and positive struggle), so the entrance to justification in Christianity is faith.

**The righteousness of God is revealed by faith** = The righteousness of the Law meant that man had to abide by all the commandments of the Law to live "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord." (Leviticus 18:5). And the Jews, in their pride, fell into the sin of self-righteousness when they carried out even one commandment such as tithes or fasting. They really couldn't carry out the law. This was confessed by the apostles themselves "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). But the Jews, like the Pharisees in their pride, were inflated as happened with the Pharisee whom the Lord Christ said about, "'The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'." (Luke 18:11-12). And the purpose of the Law was to make them feel the need for a Savior awaited by the humble and understanding righteous people, so the prophet Isaiah said, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!" (Isaiah 64:1). Therefore, the prophet Hosea told them .. try as much as you can until the awaited

Messiah comes and there will be a new way of righteousness "Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you." (Hosea 10:12). And who comes except Christ? And in Him and by Him, we are justified. Therefore, the entrance to the life of righteousness is faith in Christ. And this righteousness is not just from us to be arrogant, but righteousness is to strive, and it is by His life in us we walk in righteousness. This is the righteousness of God in Christ i.e., by the life of Christ in us He uses our members as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). Without Him, we can do nothing. In Him, we can do everything. And if we do not walk in righteousness, the Spirit convicts us of righteousness (John 16:8).

**The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith** = Faith grows and increases (2 Thessalonians 1:3+ Luke 17:5). The believer moves from one level to a higher and deeper level. And God has divided to each of us a measure of faith (Romans 12:3), and we either increase this measure or decrease it, and every faith we reach expresses our spiritual level that we have reached, and blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.. (Matthew 5:6). Such people continuously grow in their spiritual level, and therefore their faith grows from faith to a deeper and higher faith, this depends on our struggle (negative and positive) so we enter the depth in knowing and loving Christ, and also on our submission and surrender of life between God's hands with gratitude and without complaining (Colossians 2:7), by this faith grows, but we grow in glory, and from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). And certainly, the more we increase in our faith level, the more we will increase in the work of righteousness and the life of righteousness. And note that faith is a fruit of being filled with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and being filled with the Spirit comes with struggle (see the introduction). And the Holy Spirit is the one who tells us about Christ (John 16:14), so we love Christ and trust in him, and our faith increases.

**As for the just shall live by faith** = This is from the prophecy of Habakkuk 2:4. Habakkuk meant by it that Babylon will only discipline God's people, but it will not annihilate them for a simple reason, that this people is God's people. Those who worshiped idols will be annihilated by Babylon, as for the righteous who believe in God, they will live, Babylon will only discipline them to perfect them, but it cannot annihilate them. However, Paul understood the verse to mean that righteousness comes by faith and not by works (works of the law) as the Jews understood. Paul lived in his Judaism practicing good deeds, but he did not taste the life of righteousness that came from the internal reform that happened to him by faith. During the works of the law, he felt the corruption of the inside, and that he was doing good deeds, but with suppression, and longing for sin. But under the shadow of faith, he found himself doing righteousness easily and with sincere desire.

**Contemplation:** On the verse as Habakkuk intended it and with the same concept, whoever falls into the experience now, he should look to God with faith that God will have mercy on him and be compassionate towards him, and turn the distress into his good, for He is the maker of good things. And this is the opposite of those who argue with God during the trial. In this verse, we find that the believer continuously grows in the righteousness of Christ, but this does not mean that we become sinless, as long as we are in the body we are prone to sin, but repentance and confession forgive the sin.

**Verse (18): "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and**

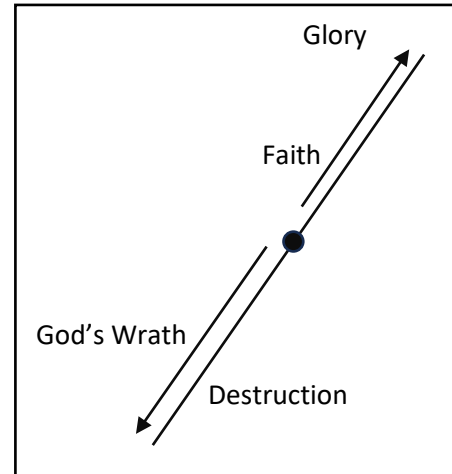
## unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"

**For** = This means that this verse is related to what preceded it. And the meaning is that the sins of the people angered God = **The wrath of God is revealed from heaven** = Therefore, this justification by faith was necessary. This anger appeared against all those who do not walk in righteousness and dignity towards God. And against those who violated the natural moral law and everyone who denied the truth and followed behind idolatrous worship and its immoral practices. Here, Paul is painting a picture of the world without the righteousness of God, that is, without Christ, and the decline that humanity has reached, which necessitated the wrath of God. And humanity in this condition deserved annihilation as happened in the Flood, but God promised Noah that He would not repeat the Flood as He wanted the life of the world. The apostle began with the evils of the nations in this chapter before mentioning the evils of the Jews so as not to be accused of being anti-Jewish.

However, the Gentiles had broken the natural moral law, and the Jews had broken the Mosaic law, so everyone needed divine intervention to be justified by faith in Christ.

And thus, there were two paths for humanity: either faith in Christ for justification, and this faith grows day by day, and the end is glory, or to continue in sins that anger God, and the decline worsens day by day, and the end is destruction (see diagram). God has declared righteousness in Christ to nullify the wrath. Those who believe are justified, and those who do not believe are subjected to wrath. The righteousness in Christ was proclaimed in the Scriptures (verses 16, 17).

**Who suppress the truth in unrighteousness** = These sins that the pagans practiced suppressed the truth, meaning that they made it not apparent and clear. Their worship of false idols and their failure to worship the true God hindered the manifestation of truth. In general, the path of sin leads to blindness (Matthew 5:8), while the path of purity is the path of being filled with the Holy Spirit, which opens the spiritual senses. When the spiritual senses are open, one is alive, and the opposite is true. That is why it is said, "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead" (sin closed your spiritual senses) (Revelation 3:1). On the contrary, when the prodigal son returned in repentance, it was said, "This my son was dead and is alive again" (Luke 15:24). The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of counsel (2 Timothy 1:7). He is the one who teaches us all things (Hebrews 8:11). Therefore, when Christ came, who is the truth, the Jews did not recognize Him because of their sins, but there were those who knew Him among the simple ones. The love of money and envy blinded the eyes of the high priest. What is said about the eyes can be said about the rest of the senses. In the story of St. Augustine, he says in his Confessions that in his sinful state before he believed, he found that the Bible was just an ordinary book less than other books (his eyes were closed to seeing the truth, his sins suppressed his vision of the truth). But after faith and repentance, he read the Bible and wept. And the Lord Christ says, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). So, whoever does not choose the true Christ will choose the world and sin, meaning falsehood, and will be enslaved to them, making this falsehood his master and god (such as money, for example). But whoever knows Christ, his eyes open to the glory of Christ, and he considers all things in the world as rubbish (Philippians 3:8), and the beginning is the purity of the heart through repentance. Conversely, whoever fills his





heart with sin and rejects God will decline to a degraded state. The Egyptians and others worshiped animals, and the Greeks worshiped diseases.

**Verse (19): "because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them."**

They suppress the truth because of their denial of God and their wicked worship of idols. Can they excuse themselves by saying that they did not have the law? The answer is no, they have no excuse.

Because true knowledge about God can be attained by the human mind. God has prepared the minds of humans to seek Him. He has implanted a seed of faith in every person. God has also given every person a conscience through which they can discern what is true (Romans 2:14-15). Simply contemplating the creation of humans, the world, or the universe proves the necessity of the existence of this God. Many philosophers have felt this and said that idols are a myth, and that there must be a God behind this nature whom we should worship. This sense of the existence of God that we perceive through His works is what distinguishes humans from animals. Notice the acceptance of children towards God, their love for Him, and their belief in divine truths. Therefore, if God gave the Jews the law of Moses, He also revealed Himself to the Gentiles through the visible nature (Psalm 19:1-9). God does not leave Himself without a witness.

**Verse (20): "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse"**

**His invisible attributes** refer to His divine power. God has manifested His power in His creation, which He made out of His love for us. However, His divine nature remains unseen by humans, and we cannot comprehend His perfection with our physical eyes. But we can understand it through His works = **through the things that are made**. **His eternal power** means that He is eternal and everlasting, without a beginning or an end. It means that He was not created by anyone; He is the necessary being, the power behind all creatures and creations. **"so that they are without excuse"** - This refers to the Gentiles. They are without excuse because if it is possible to perceive God with our minds, then they have no excuse, nor does anyone who denies the existence of God. We also note that the apostle Paul repeated this statement regarding the Jews in Chapter 2. There is no excuse for the Gentiles who worshiped the creature and abandoned the Creator, and there is no excuse for the Jews who sinned against God. And how much then we are to be blamed as Christians being temples of the Holy Spirit.

**Verse (21): "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."**

They are without excuse because, despite the wonders in creations and nature, these have given them the realization and knowledge that behind all this there must be a God = **because, although they knew God** = The apostle's words mean that man first knew God, recognized His existence,

and knew His wisdom by which He created these things.

So what happened? How did the collapse begin? And why did these pagans not glorify and thank God? The answer is in verse 18... They withheld the truth through wrongdoing.

**They did not glorify Him** = Man glorifies God by his deeds and keeping His commandments and respecting them "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). And these did not testify to God with their deeds, but they pursued their desires, not caring about God's will. And note that God's commandments were first imprinted on the hearts, and this is what is called conscience.

**They did not thank Him as God** = When one's eyes are opened and they realize the greatness, majesty, love, exaltation, abilities, and glory of God, they will praise God and offer worship out of love because He deserves this worship and praise. And we understand that the phrase "**they glorify Him**" also means that we should attribute all glory to God, for He is the Father of glory (Ephesians 1:17), so we offer Him worship and praise "to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:3-14). Praising God is the way to be filled with the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle Paul says (Ephesians 5:17-21). Being filled with the Spirit gives a person stability in God and the potential for heavenly life. The more a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, the higher they rise in the heavenly realms. This is the meaning of what was said about the cherubim, "He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind" (Psalm 18:10). The cherubim who have recognized and known God are raised by God to high heavenly ranks (cherub means fullness of knowledge). This gives them great joy, and they increase in praise, saying "Holy, Holy, Holy." These pagans, because they followed their sins, we find that their eyes have become dimmed, and they no longer recognize the truth. Instead, they walk in falsehood, unable to see the way and clinging to falsehood. Their hearts lose their understanding, and the light of God is absent from them. On the contrary, we hear the words of the Lord, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). And because these people no longer see or know God, they do not glorify or thank Him, despite the many blessings He has bestowed upon them. Thanking and glorifying God uplifts me on the path of growth, while grumbling and glorifying oneself instead of God leads to descent. This descent continues until a person reaches the darkness of the heart. Hence, the importance of abundant praises in the church and the frequent repetition of prayers of thanksgiving in all times and occasions becomes evident. As Mar Isaac the Syrian says, "Every gift without thanksgiving is without increase." This is what the angels did when God laid the foundation of the earth, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:1-7). The angels have open eyes and see the works of God, praising Him and saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Through their praise, they confess God's glory, greatness, and abilities that are manifested in His creation. It would have been more fitting for us as humans to offer confession, thanksgiving, praise, and worship to God when we discover His power in creation. God created the earth with such beauty for us to live in as humans. As for the angels, their place is in heaven. Yet, they glorify God for His creation of the earth and praise Him for His work and abilities. Through their praise of God, they increase in love for Him and consequently find joy.

When Jesus healed the ten lepers, only one of them came back to thank Him. Jesus asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17-19). Notice that Jesus did not desire their return because He needed their gratitude, but rather He wanted to give them more, as happened with the one leper who returned. He received spiritual salvation alongside physical healing. God rejoices in those who have a spirit of thankfulness because it opens them up to receive more of His blessings. Conversely, grumbling destroyed the Israelites in the wilderness.

Thankfulness makes the heart obedient in the hands of God, leading it to salvation. Such a grateful and obedient heart makes it easier for God to deal with and gives it enlightenment to know more to glorify more and so on. Spiritual healing, which involves enlightenment, sometimes requires God to allow trials and pains. Who can endure trials except a grateful heart that has discovered the love of God and recognizes that these trials are evidence of His love and a path to salvation?! On the other hand, grumbling hardens the heart. If God allows a trial, a grumbling heart rejects it and complains, and this heart darkens. Such a heart remains blind to God and fails to comprehend His love. These people walk in falsehood, unable to see the way, and cling to falsehood. Their hearts lose their understanding, and the light of God is absent from them. God gives knowledge in various ways to lead to gratitude and praise for His mercies. The lack of a sense of God's mercies is the root of all evils. If knowledge does not bear fruit, God lifts away that knowledge, which becomes a burden on the person. They begin to glorify themselves instead of glorifying God, and they descend to the point of glorifying oxen, monkeys, and rats... and now there are those who glorify money and desires.

**Verse (22): "Professing to be wise, they became fools"**

While they think of themselves as wise, for not truly realizing the truth, they have become fools and ignorant. The Egyptians, possessors of all knowledge, worshiped the calf. The Greeks worshiped diseases and human lusts, in fact, there are now those who worship Satan. Note that this speech is addressed to those who believed among the pagans and continued to boast about pagan philosophies, as if the apostle is telling them, where have your philosophies led you? They have led you to degradation.

**Verse (23): "and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."**

Those who worship God have dignity, while this degradation is the result for those who worship idols and animals. Instead of clinging to God, who has all glory - and this leads humans to eternity - humans degrade themselves and worship perishable things, and thus their destiny becomes annihilation.

**Verse (24): "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves"**

And because they followed this shameful behavior and dishonored God, God has thus removed His grace from them and left them to follow their vile desires in all impurity. God **gave them up from His hands** to their desires. God did not make them do this, rather He left them and His preserving grace abandoned them so they degraded to this level, they became like a patient who refused the doctor's treatment and his condition deteriorated. God gave them up, that is, He left them to what their hearts desired and what they wanted to do, God removed His hand from them, so they fulfilled the desires of their hearts in **uncleanness** = i.e., impurity in sexual relations which reach to sexual perversion, so they dishonored their bodies. And we should note that sin

has physical damages as well as spiritual damages.

**Verse (25): "who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."**

**Who exchanged the truth of God** = These people replaced the real God with idols, they exchanged the truth that was revealed to them in their general consciousness with the false, unreal pagan gods. Then they devoted their hearts and directed their worship to the creation and the creatures. Thus, instead of honoring and worshiping the Creator who created and formed all creatures, and who deserves our praise forever, they worshiped the creatures. God's appreciation for man was shown in that He created him in His own image and likeness, whereas man's folly and the darkness of his heart were shown in that he made God according to perishable images. Notice the decline of man who made his gods in these images, if these are the images of the gods, how much value would the man who worships them have. Notice that the term "**the lie**" is used for pagan gods, they are fictitious characters, not real, they hide the truth and neither benefit nor harm. Look at those who imagine that any wrong lust can satisfy them, they spend their whole life pursuing it, but they never get satisfied, like those who seek water that does not quench, or fissured wells that hold no water, leaving God the Satisfier, the real source of water (Jeremiah 2:13). This water that does not quench is the lie.

**Who is blessed** = When mentioning the insults of the pagans towards God, he did not tolerate their disrespect to Him, and the apostle blessed God.

**Verse (26): "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature."**

Because they worshiped creatures instead of the Creator, God withheld His grace from them as they did not deserve it. Notice the words of the Psalm, "May He grant you according to your heart's desire" (Psalms 20:4). Therefore, God withdrew His protection from them due to the hardness of their hearts, allowing them to be dominated by shameful and dishonorable bodily desires.

When God removes His grace and protection from a person, that person degrades to the lowest levels, like someone rolling down a slope until reaching the bottom. This is exemplified by the statement "I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:16). This refers to a Christian who was once in Christ but then rejected Him. Now, Christ warns him that He will remove him from the steadfastness in Him and he will no longer be united with Christ as long as he does not desire Christ.

**The "vile passions"** refer to all forms of deviant desires, including lusts of shame and dishonor, which can manifest in acts such as bestiality. This is what God warned the people against (Leviticus 22:19) as it was prevalent in Canaan before they entered the land. It is likely that the Apostle here was referring to such practices but hesitated to mention them explicitly.

**Verse (27): "Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in**

**themselves the penalty of their error which was due."**

"**Committing what is shameful**" refers to engaging in sexual acts that are considered immoral, such as sexual deviance. "**Receiving in themselves the penalty**" means that they brought harm upon themselves, and their dignity declined, as they deserved this consequence for choosing to separate themselves from God. We now witness the consequences of this behavior, as those engaged in sexual deviance are affected by diseases such as the AIDS epidemic.

**Verse (28): "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting"**

They did not desire to have true knowledge of God, so God let them have a debased mind, unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood. As a result, they engaged in actions that are improper and morally unfitting. Grace is a gift from God to humanity, and when a person misbehaves and corrupts their behavior, they deserve to have God withdraw His grace and deliver them to their own desires and disgraceful acts. The responsibility does not lie with God, but with the individual, just like a patient who refuses to follow their doctor's advice and chooses to self-medicate despite their ignorance. If the patient's condition worsens, the doctor cannot be blamed. Similarly, just as a doctor ceases to offer advice to a patient who constantly disregards it, God abandons the persistent sinner in their sin.

**Verse (29): "being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers"**

"**Unrighteousness**" refers to all forms of evil and wrongdoing in general, just as the word "righteousness" signifies goodness and virtue in general.

"**Wickedness**" here refers to causing harm to others without gaining personal benefit.

"**maliciousness**" refers to a wicked inclination towards others, while "**envy**" can lead to acts of harm or even murder, as seen in the story of Cain and Abel.

"**Strife**" refers to causing harm to others without reaching the point of murder, but rather seeking to disrupt or disturb others.

**Whisperers** = defaming a person in his absence and spreading rumors about him to ruin his reputation.

**Verses (30-31): "backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful."**

"**Backbiters**" refers to those who attribute faults and shortcomings to others and speak ill of their reputation.

"**Proud**" or "**boasters**" refers to those who are arrogant in their words, attributing to themselves what they do not possess.

**"Inventors of evil things"** means they who create untrue utterance . **An innovator in evil** introduces new innovations in wickedness, such as heresies.

**"Undiscerning"** means they reject all advice or counsel. **"Untrustworthy"** means they do not abide by their commitments or agreements with others.

**Verse (32): "who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."**

In this verse, the Apostle is referring to the Gentiles who, despite knowing that the **judgment of God** is death for those who commit such sins, still engage in them. This is evidence of the hardness of their hearts. Moreover, they not only commit these sins willingly, but also take pleasure in those who practice them. This joy is a celebration of the growth of the kingdom of Satan. They commit these sins with desire, longing, and satisfaction, indicating that their wrongdoing is intentional, arising from their intentions and purpose, not from ignorance or unawareness. Here, we see that humanity has continued to descend and deteriorate to the extent that they resemble Satan, who rejoices when someone else sins. Some people have even begun to worship Satan.

**Comment:** It is said that some of the greatest Greek philosophers were engaged in sexual deviance (homosexuality), to the extent that it became prohibited by law for slaves. This suggests that they believed there was a virtue in indulging in such acts that distinguished the free individuals from the slaves. This is the extent to which these philosophers descended, and their philosophy did not benefit them.

**Indeed, in this chapter, we see that humanity is either growing in the spirit or descending downwards.**

1. **Those who grow in the spirit:** These are individuals who strive and grow in their faith, moving from one level of faith to a higher one (verse 17). They worship God in the spirit (verse 9) and perform righteous deeds (verse 17). At the end of this ascent, we find the person resembling God, rejoicing in the faith and righteousness of their children. Here, the Apostle rejoices and thanks God for the faith of the people of Rome (verse 8).

2. **The state of descent:** This is likened to a person ascending a slope in a car, where they can either continue ascending or descend if they take their foot off the gas pedal. Similarly, those who neglect their spiritual striving.

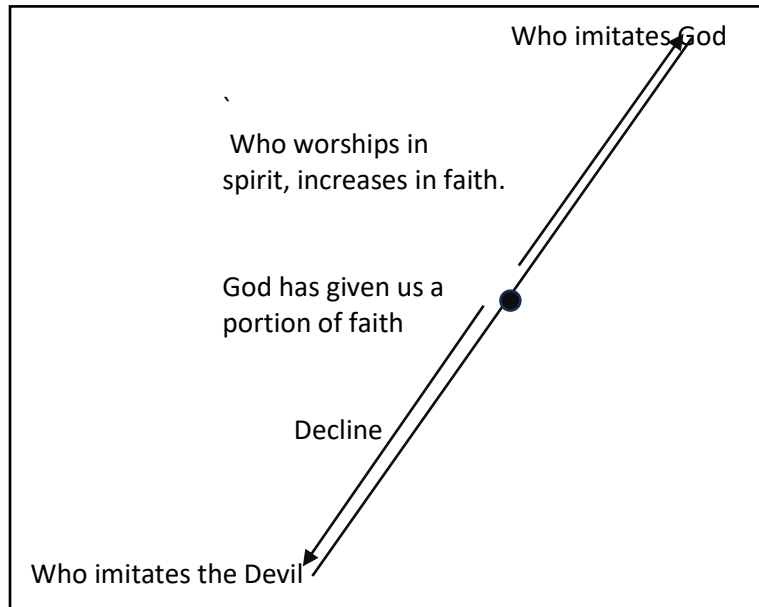
And this descent leads the person to the lowest depths (verse 27), where they oppress and darken their hearts (verse 21). They descend to a level lower than that of animals, and ultimately, we find that they resemble Satan in their actions and behavior.

**Note:** It is a form of self-deception for a person to imagine that they have reached a reasonable spiritual stage and that they are better than many others, leading them to cease their spiritual striving. This is like someone who, while driving, believes they have reached a reasonable height on the slope and lifts their foot off the gas pedal, ceasing to drive. In such a case, they will inevitably begin to descend rapidly.

**By faith to faith:** This is the process of growth (verse 17). Faith grows, as we have mentioned before. But how does it grow?

1. By having a close relationship with God and applying His commandments, we come to know Him (Matthew 7:24-27). The more we know and experience Him, our faith in Him increases.

This is accomplished through practices such as prayer, praise, and studying the Scriptures.  
2. By expressing gratitude during difficulties that God allows us to experience, we can see His hand and come to know Him (Colossians 2:7). Just as God allowed the children of Israel in the wilderness to go through trials like bitter water, so that they could see His hand at work.



# Chapter Two

**Condemning Others:** This chapter tells us that the Jews were condemning the Gentiles, but to benefit from this chapter for ourselves, we must understand that this chapter is directed at us before it is directed at the Jews. We must understand that there is a common mistake that angers God, that people tend to ignore their mistakes, relying on the fact that others do not know them, but they do not see an excuse for others in their mistakes. Because it's easy to judge others and it's hard to judge myself. While God wants us not to be preoccupied with the sins of others, but to repent of our sins (Matthew 7:1-5). We must understand that if we do not make the same mistakes as others, it is not due to our holiness but because God covers us, as for those who mock those who sin, God removes His covering from them because of their arrogance. Then he will commit the same mistake, for him to discover that he has the same weakness, but he who was covering him is God's protection. Also, for his arrogance to be broken, he will heal from the greatest sin and humble himself.

This does not mean that we judge the error to be correct, or vice versa, as this also does not please God (Proverbs 17:15 + Isaiah 5:20). But this is for those who are asked their opinion on a matter. But the general advice is to condemn the position but not to condemn the person, but to try to find an excuse for him (his circumstances/ his illness/ family problems..) as we do not know the circumstances of others. It is said that if a person makes a mistake, he is the best lawyer for himself, and if another person makes a mistake, he is the best judge against him. And what I should do when I see a person sinning is to lift my heart to God and pray for him that God may have mercy on him and help him so that he does not sin again and be saved. And by doing this, I do what pleases God, "who desires all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4).

To avoid condemnation, we must be like a car driver, who should focus on the road and not on the passengers with him. Likewise, we should focus on Christ (and Christ is the way) and heaven, where we are going, (meditate on a Psalm and repeat praises or the Jesus Prayer), and whoever does: [1] sees the holiness of God [2] realizes the extent of his own impurity and weeps over himself [3] will increase in love for Christ who forgave him all this [4] no longer preoccupied with the sins of others, for he is busy with the most important thing, that is, the love of Christ.

In this chapter, we see the characteristics of God's judgment, and these are not possessed by humans, so how can they judge others without the authority to do so.

1. God's judgment is based on truth, while humans judge according to appearances and do not know the depths of others .. (Verse 2).
2. God is patient, wishing that a person would repent.. (Verse 4). If the sinner repents, God will forgive him, so how can I condemn someone whom God has forgiven, or how can I know whether this sinner has repented or not? God does not rejoice in the punishment of the sinner, but in his repentance (Ezekiel 18:23).



3. God's judgment is fair.. (Verse 5) and without favoritism ..(Verse 11).

4. God's judgment is not based on what a person teaches, but on his deeds... (Verses 6, 13) As for humans, they will be deceived by those who teach a lot and talk a lot... (Verses 17-29).

5. God judges the inner depths of conscience, thought, and the secrets of people... (Verses 15, 16) and let's understand that condemning others is a declaration of inner weakness. And we see in the story of David and Nathan, that David sinned in the matter of Uriah and then sentenced the sinner to death in front of Prophet Nathan, thus he condemned himself. So, when we condemn others, we judge ourselves by ourselves. And in the case of Christ from the adulteress, there is a lesson for us, for he forgave her with his love but asked her not to sin again, for God is patient, while man wants to take revenge. And Christ addressed his words to the Jews "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" ... that's why they resigned as judges. And let's note that Christ alone is without sin (John 8:46), so he has the right to judge.

This chapter is indeed addressed to the Jew, but it is first addressed to the Christian, for the Christian without life is worse than the Gentile and the Jew (Hebrews 2:1-3 + Hebrews 10:26-32). And the servants should not be drawn away by temporal glory and distracted by dignities from the inner life aflame with the spirit and truth.

The Apostle Paul began with the Gentiles so that the Jews would not accuse him of betraying his people, but in this chapter and the third chapter, he showed the corruption of the Jews, indeed all humans, and everyone's need for Christ.

**Verse (1): "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."**

**"Therefore"**: refers back to what has passed. Here, the Apostle Paul is speaking to the Jews who condemn the Gentiles for their actions, while they themselves do the same actions, despite their knowledge of the law. The law is a mirror that reveals the weakness of the Jew, but instead of seeing his weaknesses in it and repenting, his heart hardens, and he usurps the place of the judge, judging others and despising them. The Jews thought that their knowledge of the law, and the fact that God distinguished them by giving them the law, would give them a special status on the day of judgment, and that God would overlook their mistakes. That's why the Apostle says here that God shows no favoritism (Verse 11). And how could God not judge them, and they knew from the law God's wrath on sin and sinners. The Lord of glory says that he who hears and does not act is like the one who built his house on sand (Matthew 7: 24-27).

**"Inexcusable"** = The Apostle spoke about the Gentiles that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20) as they have reason and conscience (the natural law). And here we see that the Jews are also without excuse as they have the law of Moses in addition to the natural law. The law gives more enlightenment, and if the Gentile sinned against the unwritten law of conscience, the Jew has sinned and transgressed against the written law of God, so his responsibility is greater, and

his punishment is harsher. The law does not justify the one who hears it but the one who obeys it (Romans 2:13). As for the Christian, he is also without excuse and his judgment is stricter than all as he has above the natural law and the law of Moses the law of the spirit of life (Romans 8:2), i.e., the grace that gives the power to change. The Christian should not argue that as a weak human being he has the right to sin, otherwise, what is the benefit of redemption and what is the benefit of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and what is the work of grace that gives a new creation.

**Verse (2): "But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things."**

God is truth and judges according to truth (John 8:16). As for the bases on which man judges, they are not according to truth, but false. For God alone is the truth. The truth is confused in man, and therefore his measurements are also incorrect, but God is the truth, and He alone knows the absolute truth. As for man, his knowledge of the truth is relative because our sins blind our eyes, and this is the meaning of "**suppress the truth in unrighteousness**" (Romans 1:18).

**Verse (3): "And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?"**

If the Jew thinks that God will not judge him for his evil deeds because he is a Jew and a son of Abraham, and that he is from the chosen people, this is a mistake. And we notice that we condemn others in front of people to appear righteous, since we do not do these acts. But if I justify myself before people, will I justify myself before God despite the same mistake in me?

**Verse (4): "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"**

Or do you, O Jew .. (or O Christian) take advantage of the richness of God's mercy, righteousness, great patience, and long-suffering, not knowing that God's kind treatment of you, that is, His compassion instead of pouring His anger on you because of your bad deeds, He actually intends to lead and push you to repent from your bad deeds. As for the one who takes advantage of God's long-suffering and is reckless, God declares His anger on him because God is Holy and cannot tolerate sin.

**Verse (5): "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous**

## judgment of God"

God prolongs His patience, but our disregard increases His wrath, and the Apostle didn't say God is treasuring up for you but "**you are treasuring up for yourself**" = Thus, judgment is the result of wrong action. ("You are treasuring up" from the concept of accumulation). "**The day of wrath**" = The day when God's righteous judgment is revealed to all people, as for now, it is a time of kindness, longsuffering, and repentance. If the Apostle said that God is storing up for us, this would mean that God punishes as a result of an emotional reaction, but his saying that we are storing up for ourselves indicates that punishment is justice. And it is the **revelation** = where every person publicly gets what they deserve.

**Verse (6): "who 'will render to each one according to his deeds':"**

This is a response to the Protestant, as the reward is according to deeds, not faith.

**Verse (7): "eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality"**

In this verse and the following verses, the Apostle focuses on human free will, and he begins in this verse with those who have the righteous share, for God wishes this were the share of all, whereas man wishes to judge everyone.

And for those who do good deeds in **patience** = that is, continually against hardships and temptations, and with patience and perseverance, seeking **glory, honor, and immortality** from God, these will receive **eternal life** = they have struggled against sin for their faith and trust in the glories of eternal life, so they will receive eternal life. We note that only those who have faith reaching the level of partnership with Christ to be justified, can perform good deeds.

**Verse (8): "but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath"**

**But to for those who are self-seeking** = self-seeking, that is, bigotry and dispute. These are: -.

- 1) Those who rejected faith and rejected Christ and thus disputed with the apostles of Christ, as the Jews did with Paul, so they surrendered to their desires and lusts to do what is inappropriate.
- 2) Or here are the Jews who are fanatically attached to their race, despising the Gentiles, preferring this to the triumph of the truth, that is, the entrance of the Gentiles into faith.

**Obey unrighteousness** = Their denial of Christ's truth makes them fall directly into sin.

In general, we note that every human being is under the influence of two voices.

1) **The voice of truth** emanating from the Holy Spirit, and this is for the Christian person. Or the conscience, which is the natural law for all humans.

2) **The voice of sin** emanating from the wrong desires present within. This is what Prophet David expressed by saying "in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51). Also, Apostle Paul expressed the same topic by saying "sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7: 20). Or any wrong call from the outside to commit a sin.

And the Apostle calls everyone to listen and obey the voice of truth, not sin.

**Verse (9): "tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek"**

Anyone who does evil will face severity and pains. And tribulations. **Of the Jew first, and then the Greek** = because the Jews received God's covenants first before the nations and took more privileges and more knowledge, then to the Greek and all other humans.

**Verse (10): "but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."**

On the contrary, God bestows glory, honor, and peace on everyone who does good.

**To the Jew first** = because the Jews are the people of grace, salvation came from them, their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were among the best of people, and the Jewish people with their previous knowledge of God were the only people who knew God and had a relationship with Him, so their spiritual experiences are more. Therefore, they have the potential for excellence and spiritual depth. They had the law and obeyed it and remained obedient to God. And those who remained and lived in piety among them, pleased God, his eyes were opened, and he knew God truly, so when Christ appeared, he believed in him because he found in him the image of God he knew, such a person in his humility realized his need for Christ (and this is what made the disciples cling to Christ, believe in him, and love him). So, he is first because he is like someone who passed the test and succeeded in it, so he has the favor in that. **Then the Greek** = for all have the same blessings, but the Greek is second because he lived in sin while he had the potential to realize God and did not do so (refer to the first chapter). But after the Greek became a Christian and lived in piety, he also becomes like someone who passed the test and the believing Jew becomes like the believing Greek, both are equal, they have the same reward.

**Verse (11): "For there is no partiality with God."**

God will treat all peoples with justice, Jews and Gentiles alike, without discrimination because

God does not show favoritism "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality'" (Acts 10:34). In fact, God will judge more severely those who had more knowledge. As for favoritism, it is a characteristic of man because he shows favoritism for his own benefit.

**Verse (12): "For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law"**

**Without the law, they will perish** = for sin is deadly, and a sufficient cause of death even without the law. Cancer as a disease was killing people before doctors discovered and diagnosed it. Sodom and Gomorrah perished without there being a written law.

**Whoever sins without the law** = But God has given every human being the light of nature, that is, the conscience, and by it, the natural human being distinguishes between good and evil. Therefore, we found principles among the pagans that have a concept of justice and compassion (like the sailors of Jonah) and purity, and the prohibition of killing, theft, and lying, and the conscience will testify against everyone even if we try to silence it. The light of the law was added for the Jews, and the light of the Gospel was added to us as Christians on top of all this. God does not leave himself without a witness. The more the capabilities, the more the responsibility, and for the Jews, the law is not a field for boasting but for working with it, and for revealing oneself and repentance. This is the difference between the gospel being for knowledge and boast or being a lived life. The law has become an extra burden on the Jews due to the increased responsibility, but the purpose of this increased burden was for them to discover their inability to fulfill the requirements of the law by themselves, and to feel their need for a savior. Unfortunately, the law turned into a tool of boasting among the Jews.

**Will be judged** = that is, with the existence of the law, sin becomes a transgression against God's right, for without the law, the sinner may find an excuse and say I don't know, but what is his excuse when God gave the commandment, and he deliberately breaks it. Therefore, the punishment of the transgressor increases, he [1] dies because of sin [2] he is held accountable for his transgression. That's why the Lord Christ said that it would be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for those who rejected Christ's call (Matthew 10:15).

**Verse (13): "for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified"**

There are those who memorize the law and preach it but do not act on it, their judgment will be harsher. Such a person may justify himself to people because of his knowledge, but not to God. But the one who will be justified is the one who acts according to the law. **Hearers** = The Jews used to read the law every Sabbath. The problem with the Jews that the apostle is addressing is

that they boast that God has given them the law. And they have a special status with God as a chosen people even if they not implementing honestly the commandments of the law.

**Doers of the law** = Therefore, God will justify the Gentile who does good deeds (people of Nineveh/Cornelius). And with the same concept, I will not be saved simply because I am called a Christian, or because I study the Bible, but because I live according to the Gospel, and only those who live it know the power of the Gospel. So those who act experience Christ and know Him, so they do not collapse from Satan's doubt in God's love (Matthew 7:24-27).

**Verse (14): "for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves"**

Just as those who sin without the law perish because they violate the law of nature, which is the conscience = and the conscience is the commandments of God that He wrote on the hearts of Adam first and then all humans. Through it, we find that every person is aware of what is right and what is wrong, as happened with Joseph. However, this conscience, with the increase of evil, becomes distorted and accepts wrongdoing. Therefore, God gave the written law to be a help for humanity.

Likewise, **those who do what is in the law** without having the written law live through their righteous deeds (Cornelius) (Acts 10:34-35). And we have seen in our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Job that even without the written law, the law was written on their hearts, which was the work of their conscience. And this is the meaning of them **being a law to themselves** = The law that God engraved in their hearts was still present within them. So, despite not having the written law, they had the law of conscience. And through this law, the Gentiles who did not have the written law performed righteous deeds, guided by their innate law. But just as the law of Moses without Christ does not save, similarly, this innate law (conscience) does not save without Christ. Both serve as guides and discipline, but they do not save. The intended meaning of the verse is "You Jews, having the law does not give you an advantage, for the Gentile who follows the commandments of God dictated by his conscience is equal to the Jew who adheres to the law."

**Verse (15): "who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them"**

**Written in their hearts** = Like Abraham and Joseph.. **Their conscience also bears witness** = Every Gentile has their own conscience that condemns them before God. Therefore, God's righteous judgment will be upon all, both Gentiles and Jews. **Excusing** = Defending with arguments and evidence. **Accusing** = Their consciences inwardly accuse them if they have sinned. Here, the conscience is mentioned instead of the written law. On the day of judgment, the

conscience of every person will stand as a witness against them when God condemns them. Their conscience has preceded and made its objection against them, and that is why they will accept God's judgment upon them. It is worth noting that the function of the law is to enlighten people's perceptions to distinguish between truth and falsehood, but this function is written in the consciences of all people, and the Gentiles demonstrate it through their moral actions and the protest of their consciences within them. However, with the increase of evil in the world, the eyes of humans have become blinded to seeing the truth, so God gave the written law to assist humans, as St. Gregory said, "You have given me the law as a help."

**Verse (16): "in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."**

**God judges the secrets** = people judge what is done in public, but God judges secrets, i.e. hidden deeds, thoughts, and secrets. And those who observe the law, God will judge their righteousness on the day when He judges the public and even the hidden deeds of humans, "**according to my gospel**" which Paul preached, and in which Jesus Christ was preached as the judge of the whole world and the supreme judge of the peoples, and He judges with truth.

**Verse (17): "Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God"**

**Indeed you are called a Jew** = Being called a Jew was seen as a source of pride for them, as they believed themselves to be superior to others, beloved by God, and honored. They would pray, "Thank you, God, for not making me a Gentile, a woman, or a slave," feeling that they were above the world. Here, the apostle rebukes their arrogance and their desire for greatness. Notice their disdain for Christ and for others. Also notice their response to the blind man, saying, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" (John 9:34), as if the law was for boasting without being fulfilled. They boasted in God as if He was their God alone, and they looked down upon the nations, calling them dogs. However, the law is meant to be fulfilled, not to be a source of pride. Refer to Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 to see the punishment for not fulfilling the law. It is said of the Jews who boasted in the law that they were like a condemned criminal (who will be executed and killed) and he boasts about criminal laws.

**Verse (18): "and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law"**

**and know His will:** He who is disciplined by the law will discern and distinguish between good and evil

**and approve the things that are excellent.** Christianity is not a religion of what is forbidden and what is permissible, but rather choosing the better from the good. We may have several solutions to any problem, and all solutions may be acceptable, but which one is the best? Each solution may have supporters, so which solution would we choose without causing a split? What is the choice that will not bring trouble and raise conflicts? Note that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of “sound mind” (2 Timothy 1: 7). Therefore, the one who is filled with the Spirit is given the right choices by the Holy Spirit. Here, the requirement is someone filled with the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is given to whoever prays and asks for Him (Luke 11: 13). Accordingly, the issue requires many prayers, supplications, and discipleship to the Word of God = **instructed out of the law**, and thus the Holy Spirit guides to the best solution. Have they really reached this level as Jews or are they in their pride?

**Verses (19-20): "and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law."**

**And are confident** = They are filled with pride. That you yourself are **a guide to the blind** = These are their own words about themselves, and they condemn themselves more. They would call themselves **guides to the blind, lights to those in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes.** These are indeed qualities of teachers. However, a teacher should not boast but rather recognize that God works through them (the blind, the foolish, and those in darkness were referring to the Gentiles). The Jews were enticed by titles, so when the young man addressed Jesus as "Good Teacher," Jesus' response implied, "Son, I am not like those who are impressed by titles" (Luke 18:18-19), and Jesus wept over those who sought glory from others but did not give glory to God (John 5:44).

**Teacher of babes** = Referring to those who are in the early stages of their spiritual life or spiritual infancy.

**Verses (21-22): "You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?"**

The apostle rebukes them because they focused on preaching without living out the message, causing the word to lose its power (1 Timothy 4:12, 13, 16). "**Do you rob temples?**" refers to the fact that the Jews permitted the theft of idols from temples. It is important to note that those who teach others should first teach themselves to be a good example.

**Verse (23): "You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?"**

They boast about having been given the law by God. However, they fail to realize that when they violate the law, they are dishonoring the very God who gave it to them.



**Verse (24): "For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written."**

Through their disobedience, they cause the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Isaiah 52:5 Ezekiel 20:23-36, 2 Samuel 12:14). That is why we pray for the sanctification of His name saying "Hallowed be thy name". There is no middle ground; either the name of God is sanctified in us, or it is blasphemed because of us.

The name of God is sanctified in us when we ourselves are sanctified and live in a manner that is worthy of holiness. By displaying our good works, people will see and glorify God's name. Conversely, through our wicked actions, the name of God is blasphemed and dishonored.

**Note:** God desired to pour out His blessings upon His people who remained faithful to His law, as a sign that God is good and generous. This would serve as a proclamation of the goodness and generosity of God. This is what happened with Abimelech when he witnessed the blessings of God upon Isaac and feared the God of Isaac. Isaac demonstrated to Abimelech the love, glory, and blessings that God bestows upon His children (Genesis 26:26-31).

Indeed, God gave them the law so that they would adhere to it and be recipients of His abundant blessings in the presence of other nations. In this way, the name of God would be glorified among the nations, and it would serve as a proclamation to them. The nations would come to know God and believe in Him. Here, the apostle rebukes the Jews because they failed in the purpose for which God created them and gave them the law - to be a means of bringing glory to His name.

**Verse (25): "For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision."**

Indeed, circumcision is beneficial if you keep the law. However, if you transgress the law, then your circumcision becomes meaningless before God, as if you were **uncircumcised**. The point being made is that breaking the covenant of circumcision is equivalent to neglecting to perform righteous deeds. Both actions signify a lack of belonging to God. The emphasis is on fulfilling the requirements of the law rather than merely focusing on external symbols like circumcision. This is summarized by the Apostle James in his letter when he says, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10).

**Verse (26): "Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?"**

In the same previous context, if the uncircumcised Gentiles keep the righteous requirements of the law, it is without a doubt that their uncircumcision will be considered as circumcision. In other words, they will be regarded as if they were circumcised. The circumcision here refers to their hearts, from which the love for sin has been cut off = will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? Therefore, God seeks for individuals to be committed to righteous deeds in order to establish a relationship with Him. These righteous deeds make them belong to God (such as Nineveh/Cornelius).

In the beginning, there was no written law, but rather the commandments of God were written on

the heart of Adam. This is what is referred to as conscience. This applied to all humanity. However, due to sin, the human heart became hardened, and people no longer grasped the commandments. So, God gave them the written law on stone tablets that suited the condition of their hearts. This was a means of assistance for humanity. Therefore, someone who walks according to the law even without having the written law demonstrates that they have a pure heart or a heart that has been circumcised, meaning that the love for sin has been cut off, or their heart still bears the commandments of God and has not become hardened. And the promise of God was, "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). This was accomplished through the Holy Spirit, who poured the love of God into our hearts (Romans 5:5). Our hearts were transformed into hearts of flesh, meaning hearts that love God. And whoever loves God keeps His commandments (John 14:23).

**Verse (27): "And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?"**

This is what happened with Cornelius. The Gentile who kept the natural law was considered better than the Jews who did not keep the law. Cornelius, with his uncircumcision and circumcised heart, was considered better than the circumcised Caiaphas, the high priest.

**Verse (28): "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh"**

**The Jew who is one outwardly** refers to someone who practices the rituals and ceremonies of the law, appearing to be circumcised and observing purification rituals by water, etc. However, they transgress the law by not keeping its commandments. Because of their actions, they bring reproach upon the name of God among the nations. It is important to understand that God is not concerned with outward appearances but with a righteous heart that fears Him and keeps His commandments. Therefore, the intended meaning of saying "**the Jew in outward** appearance" is referring to a person who is content with superficial acts.

**Verse (29): "but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."**

**The Jew who is one inwardly** is someone who practices and keeps the commandments of the law not to be seen by others, but for the sake of pleasing God. This person cares about their heart and seeks the glory of God. This is what God praises. On the other hand, the Jew who is outwardly focused seeks praise from others because they prioritize appearing righteous in front of people to gain their approval. Therefore, let us strive to seek praise from God instead of seeking empty praise from others.

**He is the true Jew**, or the genuine Israelite, as the Lord said about Nathanael (John 1:47). This is what grace accomplishes now in the Christian. Faith has replaced the law, which the Jews failed to use to establish a relationship with God.

**Circumcision of the heart**, as defined by the Apostle in Colossians 2:11-12, refers to the removal of the body of sins. It signifies the rejection of sin in the heart.

**By the Spirit**, as compared to Romans 8:13, this transformation is accomplished. It is through the Spirit that one puts to death the deeds of the body, as described in Colossians 3:5, and stands dead to sin, as in Romans 6:11. This transformation occurs through the power of the Spirit, not through the law, which lacks the ability to bring about change. Grace, on the other hand, cuts off the love of sin from the heart and puts it to death, just as circumcision cuts off a part of the body and leaves it to die. However, this requires crucifying the flesh with its desires and passions (Galatians 5:24). **Not in the letter**, refers to following the rituals and ceremonies of the law. Circumcision was a commandment of the law. The Spirit gives us the ability to be a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

# Chapter Three

Paul did not say in the second chapter that the law is useless or that circumcision is useless, but rather that whoever is circumcised and does not act according to the law has become like the uncircumcised. Therefore, he does not diminish the value of the law, but exposes the Jews who did not act according to it. However, when Apostle Paul said that God would treat the Jew as the Gentile, and that everyone is equal before God, he imagined that the Jews in their revolt would question. Didn't God honor the Jews and give them circumcision as a sign of membership (Deut 33:29+ Exo 19:5 + Isa 41:8)? And the law, the book called it living words (Acts 7:48). The book was delivered to them. and the prophets were from them. So, if God is going to treat the Jew like the Gentile, why the law?! And what is the benefit of circumcision?! And this is what the apostle began with in the chapter. The question he imagined the Jews would ask.

**Verse (1): "What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?"**

If the Gentile can please God by performing good deeds through the natural law given to him. And since everyone has fallen into condemnation, whether Gentiles (for violating the natural law) or Jews (for violating the law of Moses), what is the benefit of circumcision or what distinguishes the Jews?

**Verse (2): "Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God."**

The first advantage of the Jews is that God entrusted them with His words. Thus, they were better than the Gentiles before God, for God would not have entrusted anyone with His words if they were not worthy of it. And the Jews were the first to whom God entrusted His words. Here the Apostle mentions one advantage of the Jews and continues the rest of their characteristics in (Rom 4:9). They were entrusted or **committed the oracles of God** = it was said that they became the custodians of the Christian library. The Torah contained complete prophecies about the Messiah. The book in their hands, with its prophecies about the Messiah, testified that God's plan for the salvation of the world was an eternal plan and that God is unchanging (i.e., God created man free, and with His foreknowledge He knew that he would fall, and out of His love He was prepared to pay the price of his salvation on the cross). They were undoubtedly custodians of their book and handed it over to us without distortion. God chose Abraham alone, the believer, amidst a pagan world that deviated from the truth. Abraham was the best of those in the world, and He gave him circumcision, which was a sign of God's covenant with them, so they were indeed distinguished from the rest of the surrounding nations. God chose them as His special people, from whom the Messiah, the Virgin, the Apostles, the Prophets, and all the righteous of the Old Testament would come out. All these righteous people emerged under the shadow of the law. Let's note that God gave conscience to all people as a witness to the truth within human hearts, and when the conscience became corrupt, God provided the law to help humans, but He gave it to those who appreciate it, that is, to the best of people,

and these were the Jews. This was until the coming of Christ, and by His grace, all humans are accepted, for by grace everyone will change from their old corrupt nature and become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). That is, salvation is for them and from them, but it is not exclusive to them. But the favor of the Jews was before the coming of Christ, whereas after Christ, all are one (Gal 3:28).

**Verse (3): "For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?"**

God has poured out His blessings on the Jews, but when He came to seek fruit, He found nothing but disobedience and infidelity. However, their failure to preserve God's covenants and promises does not invalidate God's faithfulness in His plan for the salvation of humanity. The Jews' non-compliance with the law will not hinder God's plan that the Messiah will come from the lineage of the Jews. That's because if some of these Jews have shown dishonesty, their dishonesty does not hinder God's faithfulness, nor does it invalidate God's love for the truth, nor does it hinder God's truthfulness in His promises. Paul here is not criticizing the law, but the Jews who violate the law. Paul did not say that the law is useless, but it is useful if it is combined with righteousness. **"For what if some"** = the Apostle did not say everyone, but if some. He does not generalize sin. As for us, we have a flaw in attributing mistakes and flaws to everyone.

**Verse (4): "Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.'"**

Even if the whole world is found to be wrong, God will remain truthful. And the Apostle did not resort to the history of the Jews in their book to show their sins and their lack of faith in contrast to God's righteousness, but he resorted to the words of the prophet David in the Psalm, **"That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."** So, despite my sin and the sins of humans and the sins of the Jews, God did not care about them but sent His only Son because He promised to do so. Here, Paul, based on David's words, affirms God's truthfulness and faithfulness, and that He did everything to justify them, but they did not believe. **"And may overcome when You are judged"** = if a sinner tries to justify himself that he has an excuse, God will show him that He did everything for him to be saved, but he is the one who refused. God did everything for the Jews, and they did not benefit from His deeds.

**Note:** We should not be disturbed when we see people leaving the faith, for there is Judas who betrayed the Lord after all he had seen. And there are also the faithful martyrs of Christ.

**Verse (5): "But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)"**

Here Paul is responding to some who misunderstood his words and exploited them wrongly when he said, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Rom 5:20). Also, the Apostle responds to those among the pagans who said, "Because of the sin of the Jews, the righteousness of God appeared and became incarnate. So, let's increase in sin so that the righteousness of God

will appear more." There are those who exploit anything to justify their sins and continue in them. Since Adam's first sin, humans have become accustomed to denying their sin and even attributing it to others. The meaning of the verse is that if our sin reveals the righteousness of God (in a contrast way), then God becomes unjust because He is angry at our sin and our wrong actions. I am here (Paul says) speaking and thinking like an ordinary person who tries to justify his sin. Evil cannot be a cause for good, but God in His wisdom brings good out of evil... He brings sweetness out of bitterness.

**Verse (6): "Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?"**

"**Certainly not!**" = This is like saying, "Get away from me, Satan." It is a rejection of bad thought. For it is impossible for God to be unjust. If His righteousness increases and appears through my sin, then how does He judge and rule over humanity and reward each one according to his deeds? Therefore, this thought is rejected.

**Verse (7): "For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?"**

The meaning of the verse: God will not be able to judge the world if my sin = **my lie**... increases His righteousness.

By referring to his sin as **a lie**, the Apostle is highlighting that every sin involves an element of falsehood (the enemy of good mixes a portion of truth with a portion of falsehood). Sin is a behavior that contradicts God's commandments, and God gave these commandments not to control humans, but to protect them from the evil, distress, and humiliation that result from sin. However, sin is deceitful and false, promising pleasure but only providing fleeting moments of enjoyment followed by pain and sorrow. Therefore, when he says, "**has increased through my lie**," he means that his sin or falsehood is manifesting God's righteousness and truthfulness even more.

God is the truth, and man was created to live for God, that is, according to the truth. Anyone who does not live for God but for himself has abandoned the truth and become a liar because he is fulfilling his own will, not God's. He lives in a way other than what he was created for. Notice that any deviation from the truth is a lie and a delusion. Anyone who follows his desires is in delusion. Therefore, sin in general is a lie, that is, untruth.

**Verse (8): "And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'?; as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just."**

"**As we are slanderously reported**" = There are people who falsely accused and wronged Paul, attributing these words to him. Even the Lord of Glory Himself was accused of colluding with Beelzebub. Accusing the servants of the Lord is an old satanic game. They falsely accused Apostle Paul of calling believers to commit evil and bad deeds. Those who do this are justly condemned by God, for they have made themselves tools in the hands of Satan.

"**Let us do evil**" = They are justifying themselves in what they do.

**Verses 9-18:** This is a condemnation of everyone, Jews and Greeks alike, so that every mouth may be silenced, and everyone may seek mercy. The Apostle shows here that everyone has sinned, whether Jews or Gentiles, and all humans are in dire need of Christ, so that everyone can be justified by faith. Justification is a free grace that does not allow boasting about the deeds of the law, and no one has any merit in this justification. Indeed, salvation comes from the Jews (John 4:22) because they have the covenants and from them came the Messiah. And those who believe or who have believed in the Messiah among them until now are accepted by God.

**The corruption of all human nature, both Jews and Gentiles.  
As a result of inheriting the original sin.**

God created man in incorruption (St Basil's Liturgy). When our parents Adam and Eve sinned, the sin virus entered them. Immediately, our parents felt that they were naked, a change occurred within them, they lost their original innocence, and lust entered them. This is what is called the law of sin. Law means a rule that applies to all humans. This sin virus was transmitted to Adam's offspring as Saint Paul the Apostle said, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). We refer to the sin that entered the world when Adam sinned as the original sin. The fact that this sin entered the world means that all human beings, the sons of Adam, have inherited this sin.

St Basil's Liturgy expresses the inheritance of sin when we pray and say, "When we disobeyed Your command by the deception of the serpent, we fell from eternal life and were exiled from the paradise of joy...". We were not in the garden, nor did we eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but we were in Adam, a part of him, when he fell. In the same concept, we pray in the Gregorian Liturgy saying, "One plant there was, from which You forbade me to eat...I ate of my own free will...I brought upon myself the sentence of death". So, the meaning of inheriting sin is that we were in Adam when he sinned, so we inherited his sin (original sin) and its consequences and punishment like death, and the corruption of our nature, even the corruption of nature around us. That's why we pray in the Litany of the Departed and say, "For no one is pure and without blemish even though his life on earth be a single day".

**The corruption of the entire human race.**

The corruption of the entire human race occurred, and this corruption became evident immediately, as seen in Cain's murder of his brother Abel. This corruption extended to all descendants of Adam. "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5). Additionally, "So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:12-13). God judged by bringing death upon all creation. This was evident in God's judgment of the flood, where all creatures perished. However, God preserved Noah and his family to continue life on earth and to become a new creation.

Indeed, the flood and the ark symbolize the concept of the new creation through baptism (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is a death with Christ and a life with Christ, the head of the new creation. This is

what happened in the flood and the ark, as the old creation died and the new creation emerged with Noah as the new head of creation.

Indeed, God preserved Noah and his family and did not destroy them because God does not desire the destruction of all creation but rather its renewal as a new creation. God created Adam out of love for him, as "For you would not have made anything if you had hated it" (Wisdom 11:22-27).

The entire human race was corrupted when all were in Adam at the time of his sin. However, the scriptures sometimes mention individuals described as righteous or blameless, but this righteousness or perfection is relative, meaning they were better in comparison to those around them. We see this, for example, with Lot (2 Peter 2:7) and Job (Job 1:8). Both of them had their own sins, but they were considered righteous in comparison to the society they lived in. The purpose of mentioning the sins of righteous ancestors like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David in the Holy Scriptures was to:

1) In order to understand that there is no righteous person, not even one, it means that there is no human being capable of offering redemption for humanity.

2) Therefore, it was necessary for salvation to come from heaven and not from the earth. To explain that humans are incapable of freeing themselves from the original sin inherited from Adam, the revelation states, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil." (Jeremiah 13:23). The Ethiopian is born with dark skin and the leopard with spots, and neither can change the color of their skin. Likewise, we are unable to change our nature by ourselves without divine intervention.

3) Furthermore, so that we may not despair, if they sin, then we have hope. Our hope is in Christ, for just as we inherited sin, death, and punishment from Adam, in the new birth through baptism, we also inherit all the attributes of Christ, such as eternal life, authority over sin, and even eternal glory.

### **Man is born inheriting sin from the womb of his mother.**

David the prophet says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and **in sin my mother conceived me**" (Psalm 51:5). "Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones? Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men? No, in heart you work wickedness....They go astray **as soon as they are born...**" (Psalms 58:1-3). Additionally, "And were called a transgressor **from the womb.**" (Isaiah 48:8).

Notice the words of John the Baptist, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away **the sin of the world!**'" (John 1:29). Here, John is referring to sin in the singular form. So, what is the sin that exists in the entire world and that all humans on earth, except for Jesus, partake in? It is **the original sin** inherited by the whole world, or the entire creation, from Adam.

### **The original sin was the cause of many sins.**

The human race became corrupted due to original sin, which resulted in many sins. Every person sins as a result of the corruption that occurred in their nature. As a consequence of all this corruption and sin, death reigned overall. The redemption of Christ was for both the original sin and the personal sins that arise from it. The Lord says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."



(John 3:16). "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10).

Adam committed one sin, which brought corruption and entered death, resulting in many sins from all humanity. The redemption of Christ was for both Adam's sin, the original sin, and the numerous sins of all humanity, as the Apostle Paul says, "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification." (Romans 5:16). Returning to the verse in Jeremiah 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" The Ethiopian is born with such a skin color, as it signifies the original sin with which we are born. As for the spots of the leopard, they represent the personal sins that arise from the corruption of nature due to the original sin with which we are born. Both the original sin inherited from birth and the sins we commit by our own will cannot be overcome except through divine intervention. This was accomplished through the redemption of Christ, who bore the punishment for us and carried both out of love for us.

### **How did the Old Testament explain the idea that Christ offered redemption for original sin and the sins that originated from it?**

Indeed, Christ offered redemption for both the original sin inherited from our father Adam and the sins that arise from the corruption of our nature. This is explained by the fact that the Jews had two sacrifices for their sins, namely the sin offering and the trespass offering. The sin offering was offered for the original sin, or rather, for our nature that became corrupt due to the original sin. As for the trespass offering, it was offered for the sins that arise from the corruption of our nature (see Leviticus 4:1-6:7).

**Verse (9): "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin."**

"**Are we**" refers to the Jews who have entered into faith, including Paul himself. Here, he is questioning whether they are spiritually and morally superior to the Gentiles. And he answers, "Not at all." He has previously made it clear that all, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under condemnation. "**We have previously charged**" means that they have accused and presented the argument.

**Verses (10-11): "As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.'"**

"**There is none righteous, no, not one**" (quoted from Ecclesiastes 7:20). "**There is none who understands**" (quoted from Psalm 14:2 and Psalm 53:2). And also, "**There is none who seeks after God.**" This means that there is no righteous person, not even one. There is no individual with a pure mind detached from the darkness of sin, capable of comprehending and understanding moral and religious truths. There is no person who eagerly and passionately seeks to know God and ardently desires from their heart to please God by keeping His commandments, rejecting the desires of their sinful heart. There is no one who actively seeks and searches for

knowledge of God. This is a result of being attached to sinful desires.

When a person commits sin, the eyes of their mind become dimmed, and they are no longer able to see and comprehend the divine mysteries. An example of this is Adam, who, after sinning, was no longer able to comprehend the love of God. He hid and fled from the presence of God. Even now, there are those who do not understand and do not seek God. How many believers find their delight and joy in sitting with God? Who has discovered this? Unfortunately, not many. Sadly, many do not know anything beyond the pleasures and deception of the world. However, as the heart becomes purified, a person can see and comprehend the sweetness of God (the pure in heart see God), and this is achieved through repentance.

**Verse (12): "They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."**

See (Psalms 14:3 and Psalm 53:3). When they abandoned God and left the path of virtue, they became corrupt.

**Verse (13): "'Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit'; 'The poison of asps is under their lips'"**

Refer to (Psalm 5:9) (Septuagint) + (Psalm 140:3). **"Their throat is an open tomb"** means that the throat of these wicked individuals is like an open grave, as they plot death for their neighbors. The words that come out of their mouths have a foul odor. **"With their tongues they have practiced deceit"** means that they speak sweet words for evil purposes. It is worth noting that the Lord referred to Satan as the father of lies, and these individuals engage in lies and deception. Their wicked words drip from their sinful lips like poison. This implies that they harm people with their words and spread slander about them, which can lead to their figurative or even physical death. **"Asps"** refers to venomous snakes.

**Verses (14-18): "'Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.' 'Their feet are swift to shed blood;. Destruction and misery are in their ways;. And the way of peace they have not known.' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes.'"**

**"Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"** (Psalm 10:7) refers to their use of curse words against God and other people. (See Isaiah 59:7, Proverbs 16:1, Isaiah 59:7-8, Psalm 36:1) in that order. Those who do not fear God are prone to committing any kind of evil.

**Verse (19): "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."**

Whatever the law says, it is addressed to those who are under the law, meaning the Jews, in order to expose and humble them, breaking their pride. The law they boast about ends up condemning them (for the law reveals the wound and exposes the extent of their inward corruption without

offering a remedy). Therefore, Paul concludes that everyone, both Jews and Gentiles, are shut up under disobedience. Judaism relies on the law of Moses, and paganism relies on the law of conscience, but both failed to provide salvation for their followers. Thus, the world is in need of proclaiming God's righteousness through the one righteous person, Jesus Christ.

We notice, in the previous verses, Paul used the verses from the law to silence the proud mouths of the Jews and prevent them from objecting.

**Verse (20): "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."**

Saint James says, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). For whom among humans has not stumbled in at least one area. The purpose of the law is to judge sins and condemn sinners, but it is incapable of justifying anyone to stand blameless before God. The law was given to expose sin and sinners as a preparation for the manifestation of God's righteousness, which alone has the power to erase sin and justify the sinner through being born again. **"For by the law is the knowledge of sin"** means that the law is not the cause of sin, but through the law, our condition in the spiritual life is revealed. Here, the law is like a mirror that reflects the sins and corruption of humanity (just as a mirror shows the flaws of the face but cannot fix them). The law was unable to justify humans because they were unable to fulfill its commandments. Thus, through the law, it becomes evident that all humans deserve God's retribution as a result of sin. It is logical that a criminal cannot appeal to the law (the Torah) that condemns them seeking forgiveness, but it is logical to seek mercy and forgiveness.

**Verse (21): "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets"**

Humanity failed to be justified by the law of Moses and by natural law, causing the world to be engulfed in deep darkness and losing all righteousness. This was the night of the seventh day of creation. **"But now"** signifies the rising of the sun of righteousness, meaning that Christ came to offer us the righteousness of God through His union with us, so that we may bear the characteristics of the Son and His righteousness becomes our righteousness.

**The righteousness of God apart from the law** = The righteousness of God, meaning God is the source of all righteousness within me.

**Apart from the law:**

1. Because the Jews exploited the law to establish their own righteousness (Romans 9:31-32 and Romans 10:3-4), they became inflated with pride. An example of this can be seen in Paul himself, who referred to himself as blameless according to the law, but in the context of grace, he considered himself the foremost of sinners. Understanding that a sign of repentance is to abhor ourselves (Ezekiel 20:43). Why does the repentant person abhor themselves? Because the repentant person's eyes are opened to see how filthy their sins are, and also to see the purity and light of God. In the intense light of Christ, one sees their sins more clearly and abhors themselves. This light caused the Apostle Paul to say, "of sinners, of whom I am chief." However, this turns into love and praise for Christ, who accepted me despite all my filthiness,

even though I am undeserving. The more one is forgiven, the more one loves. This is contrary to the righteousness of the law, which breeds pride.

2. The righteousness of God apart from the law is meant to be for both Jews and Gentiles. This righteousness comes through faith and baptism, where the old man dies with Christ and is raised with Him. Christ gives His life to the individual, making them a new creation. This applies to all, both Jews and Gentiles.

3. The purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ, and once Christ appeared, the role of the law ended as it had reached its ultimate goal. Therefore, without the works of the law, the righteousness that God bestows is revealed.

4. The Gentiles do not know the law, but the righteousness that comes through Christ is for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, it was necessary for this righteousness to be apart from the law so that the Gentiles, who do not know the law of Moses, can be justified.

**"Being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets"** means that the righteousness of God through Christ was foretold and testified by the law and the prophets. They spoke about Christ and the righteousness that comes through Him (Isaiah 46:12-13, Isaiah 51:4-5, Isaiah 61:1-11, Isaiah 64:1, Daniel 9:24). Therefore, the righteousness through Christ was in the eternal thoughts of God and manifested in the fullness of time.

The Jews were obligated to adhere to the law, seeking to purify themselves as much as possible until the appearance of Christ, when people could comprehend the righteousness that comes through Him. As the prophet Hosea said, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you" (Hosea 10:12).

**Verse (22): "even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference"**

This righteousness is given by God through faith in Jesus Christ (faith being the gateway to justification, as mentioned in the introduction of justification). However, there are multiple steps involved. For without Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is important to note that faith is not merely a theoretical belief that God is one in three persons. Rather, it is faith that believes that Christ is able to give me life, that His work in my life is powerful, and that He is a compassionate God who allows for the good. This means that faith experiences increase day by day (see commentary on Romans 1:17) and faith grows.

1. Through prayer: "O Lord, help my unbelief."

2. Through intimacy with God (prayer, praise, studying the Bible), the Holy Spirit opens my eyes to know Christ (John 16:14). As a result, my love for Him and my confidence in Him increase, which means my faith in Him grows.

3. With thanksgiving amidst tribulations and without complaint (Colossians 2:7).

And this righteousness is given **to all** who believe. The grace will reach every believer, pouring down from heaven upon both Jews and Gentiles without distinction, **For there is no difference.**

Therefore, it makes no sense for them to reject or despise one another, or to boast over one another. Some have interpreted the apostle's words "**on all**" to mean that righteousness will be like a crown placed on the head of the believer. Rather, it is like a garment that we put on (see Isaiah 61:10-11), and this righteousness is Christ Himself, which we put on (Romans 13:14), meaning that people see in us the image of the righteous Christ.

In a clear prophecy about Christ, the prophet Jeremiah referred to Him as "the Lord our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5-8). This is the meaning behind the white robes that John saw in his vision (Revelation 7:9-14).

**The righteousness of man:** No one is righteous, not even one.

**The righteousness of man through the law:** God gave the law as a guide and assistance, but those who attempted to abide by it failed. When some were able to fulfill certain commandments, they became self-righteous and considered themselves righteous (this is known as self-righteousness).

**The righteousness of God:** There is no righteousness without sin except for God. There is no justice except for God. The words righteousness and justice have the same meaning for Him.

**We become the righteousness of God in Him:** (2 Corinthians 5:21) We, in Christ the righteous, are counted as righteous if we remain in Him (Colossians 1:28). And the true Christian understands that all righteousness he does is due to the life of Christ in him and the work of grace with him.

### **Verse (23): "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"**

There is no distinction because everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory that God bestows. When Moses saw a glimpse of God's glory, his face shone, so imagine the glory that Adam had in the Garden of Eden. Through sin, we have lost the image of this glory and forfeited God's grace. We have even lost sight of God (Isaiah 45:15). Let us understand that glory is the presence of God among us (Zechariah 2:5). His glory manifests in the midst of His children and is reflected upon them (1 John 3:2). Our true glory is to have God among us and dwelling within us. Christ came to restore the image of glory to us (John 17:22) and to pour out His grace and righteousness upon us. We are now in a glory that is not yet fully revealed, as God dwells in us, but this glory will be fully declared in us in eternity (Romans 8:18).

**"For all have sinned"** means that we have lost the image of glory due to sin. In fact, we have become unable to bear witness to the glory of God because of the weakness that has occurred in our nature as a result of sin. Adam could not bear to see God after he sinned, so he hid. This weakness continued, to the point that when Moses asked to see the glory of God, God told him that no one can see Him and live (Exodus 33:20). This is like someone wanting to look at the sun, but their weak eyes cannot bear the brightness of the sun. Therefore, the Apostle Paul said that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). How can we inherit glory if we are unable to see it? This can only happen after we put on glorified bodies.

### **Verse (24): "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"**

**"Being justified":** Refer to the introduction.

**"Freely":** It does not mean that the price is low, but rather that it cannot be valued with money. It is said (perhaps a symbolic story for explanation) that they developed a cancer treatment that cost hundreds of millions of pounds, and they wanted to test it. There was a woman whose son had a serious illness, and she went to this hospital seeking treatment for her son. They told her that they had a drug under trial, and she said, "Let us use it." The boy was healed, and she asked

about the cost of the treatment. Since the price was exorbitant, and she could not imagine the cost, they told her that this medicine was free. Therefore, the Lord said, "Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17 & Isaiah 55:1-5). We just need to believe in order to receive salvation through grace (faith is the entrance, and there are other steps. Refer to the introduction).

**Verse (25): "whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed"**

**"Propitiation"**: In Hebrew it's derived from the word "cover". Christ has covered us with His blood, and the Father no longer sees the one who is established in Christ in their weak state. Instead, He sees Christ Himself and is pleased with those who are established in Him. This is perfectly illustrated by the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, which contained the tablets of the law. These tablets called for death to anyone who violated the written commandments. But the mercy seat had a cover, and the cover was sprinkled with the blood of the atoning sacrifice. God would be pleased and forgive the people's sins when He saw the blood. This was a symbol of what Christ accomplished on the cross. This signifies that Christ is alive to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25) and that it is not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with His own blood that He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, finding eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:7). **"Whom God set forth"** means that God the Father presented His Son to be a sacrifice and to always be before Him, so that He may forgive, by His mercy, those who remain steadfast in Him and grant His righteousness to those who believe. Christ becomes the mediator for reconciliation between God and humanity, and **faith** is the entrance to all of this, **to demonstrate His righteousness**. By shedding His blood, Christ demonstrated the justice of God, the God who cannot tolerate sin, and the necessity of punishment for sin. This punishment was borne by Christ. **"His righteousness"** refers to the justice of God. **"The sins that were previously committed"** refers to the sins of the past. **"Because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins"** means that God showed patience and did not immediately punish the sins of the fathers, but waited until Christ came to reconcile the state of humanity. From this verse, we understand that the blood of Christ and His redemption encompassed the righteous fathers from Adam to Christ with retroactive effect.

**Verse (26): "to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**

**"To demonstrate His righteousness"**: This means that God did not forgive humanity freely, but rather He Himself bore the punishment for sin. Justice and mercy met at the cross. **"At the present time"**: Christ offered His blood as a propitiation to demonstrate His righteousness in the present time, which is the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). **"That He might be just"**: There is no one righteous except God, and His righteousness was manifested in the sacrifice of Christ. Firstly, in the punishment of sin, for He is **Holy**. Secondly, in fulfilling His promises to humanity that He would redeem and save them (Isaiah 44:22,24). Thirdly, in the fact that Christ gives us His life, enabling us to live in righteousness. **"And the justifier of the one who has faith"**: It is

noteworthy that the previous verse shows that Christ justified the fathers who came before Him through His blood, and this verse shows that justification through His blood will be for everyone who believes until the end of time. This is because this is how God is just, and His mercy will encompass all of humanity. This justification is readily available to anyone who believes (this is the entrance) and realizes their need for this justification.

And this is the interpretation of the sun's return during the days of King Hezekiah, which means that the righteousness of Christ included the righteous of the Old Covenant, then the sun returns to its natural course and the righteousness of Christ includes those who believe until the end of time.

**Verse (27): "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith."**

**"Where is boasting then?"** After understanding that justification comes through faith in the blood of Christ, what do we have to boast about? Do we boast in the law of Moses? This law that condemns us to death! Or do we boast in the law of works? Do we boast in our works? Do our works give us life? No, we boast in the work of Christ, which has given us life that we receive through faith. **"Law of faith"** means that faith is not chaotic, but it has a law that we abide by. It is the law of love and freedom; it is faith working through love (Galatians 5:6). It is the guidance of the earnest and meticulous Spirit.

Note that this statement by Paul is the statement of a man whose eyes are open, for he used to say, "as to the law, I am blameless" (Philippians 3:6). But after grace, his eyes were opened, he said "sinners, of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15). And when he became aware of his sins, he understood that his deeds do not save or give life.

**Verse (28): "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."**

For if the law was effective, it would have appeared before the coming of Christ. And the law here means purifications, washings, and circumcision. However, this does not mean that the Apostle intends to nullify the moral commandments, such as the Ten Commandments, for example.

**Verse (29): "Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also"**

Paul clarifies to the Jews that their disdain for the Gentiles dishonors the glory of God, as they want Him to be their God alone and not the God of all. If He is the God of all, then He holds everyone accountable and governs everyone, being the Creator of all. As God for everyone, He must care for everyone and save everyone through the same way, which is faith.

**"Or is He the God of the Jews only?"** Here, Paul is addressing the Jews who have believed in Christ, saying that if they have understood that salvation is not through the law or works, but through faith, then the Gentiles also have the ability to be saved under the same condition, which

is faith.

**Verse (30): "since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith."**

There is one God for both the Jews and the Gentiles, and He will justify both by faith in Jesus Christ.

**Verse (31): "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."**

This verse demonstrates the connection between the two covenants, as God inspired both of them. And the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17-18). As we have understood, the law is incapable of achieving salvation. But why does Paul establish it?

1. Through faith, the purpose of the law is fulfilled in the justification of humanity (Romans 8:4), but not through the law alone, rather through Christ. In fact, the ultimate goal of the law is Christ (Romans 10:4). Those who follow the law will eventually come to Christ. The greatest evidence of this is seen in the disciples of Christ, who lived in simplicity, following the commandments of the law without pride, and thus they knew Christ. However, the priests and Pharisees lived to establish their own righteousness, and they did not recognize Christ because their focus was on themselves rather than on God.
2. The law exposes our sins, reveals our weaknesses, and highlights our inability to keep its commandments, leading us to turn to Christ. The law declares our constant need for Christ.
3. Through Christ, we become Perfect as the law intended.
4. The law previously spoke of the promises fulfilled by Christ.
5. Christ was crucified to forgive our transgressions against the law.
6. The law serves as a guide for us in our spiritual struggle. We should follow its moral commandments.

We understand from the previous statements that the opposite is true. Not believing in Christ nullifies the law because the law testifies to Christ. Rather, we understand that we establish the law because the testimony of the law through its prophecies about Christ is evidence of God's eternal plan for redemption through Christ. It is a testimony for the Jews and for everyone about Christ, as the prophecies paint a clear picture of Christ from His birth to His ascension.

**"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:23).

**What does the word "sin" mean?**

In Greek, the word "sin" means to miss the mark or to fall short, failing to reach the intended goal and thereby missing out on the reward.

Spiritually speaking, anyone who goes against the commandments of God commits sin, and as a result, misses out on the reward.

**What is the reward?** The reward is the glory of God. "Fall short of the glory of God" means that they deprived themselves of the glory of God and being in His presence, as there is no



fellowship between light and darkness. The term "fall short" implies being deprived of something or being in need of it.

### **Why did God give the commandment?**

God does not want to control people; He wants people to enjoy the glory that He desires for them. Since God created us free in His image, He had to give us the commandment as a guide so that we do not lose this glory. The commandment is the best thing that God has prepared for humans, and through it we reach glory, so we are no longer in need of glory (Ezekiel 20:11). God did not say that He split the sea for them or freed them from Egypt... etc. Instead, God sees that the best thing He gave them is the commandment, as it is the path of life and glory. So, if we say that the goal is to get what God wants for us, let's see how God created us:

1. **To live eternally:** God has given us life so that we may live forever. This is if we partake of the tree of life, and the tree of life symbolizes union with God.
2. **To be in His glory:** We were in the presence of God, experiencing a reflection of His glory upon us.
3. **To rejoice:** God created us in the Garden of Eden, and the word "Eden" means joy. Therefore, God wants us to experience joy.

Therefore God wants for us: 1- Eternal life, 2- Glory, 3- Joy.

### **When we sinned, meaning when we made a wrong choice, we lost the goal.**

1. When we separated ourselves from God, as there is no fellowship between light and darkness, we lost life and death entered the world. This is the meaning of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our taste of sin caused us to separate from God and experience death, because God is life. This was a free choice, but it was wrong, resulting in the loss of the reward and the loss of the goal that God intended.
2. We lost the glory since we no longer see God, and His glory no longer reflects upon us.
3. We were expelled from the garden of joy and ended up in sorrow in the world.

### **So, what happened when joy was lost from mankind?**

Man replaced the true joy that God gives with sensory pleasures and incorrectly named them joy. Therefore, directly after sin, we hear "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Genesis 3:6-7). However, with sensory pleasures came sadness and misery.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Therefore, sin is when we seek what we want, not what God wants, and as a result, we separate ourselves from God. And we lose everything that God has prepared for us</b></p>
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What God wants is holiness, meaning to rise above everything that is wrong on earth, seeking heavenly life (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

### **And God did not leave us ..... and Christ became incarnate.**

1. To unite with our nature, but we still have freedom, that's why He says, "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). And because Christ is life, we will live forever.
2. Since Christ is within us, the glory has returned to us "For I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst." (Zechariah 2:5). But it is a glory that is not revealed now (Romans 8:18). And Christ, through His incarnation, was glorified in the body

to give us to be glorified with this glory. Compare the two verses John 17:5 and John 17:22.

3. Despite the sadness in the world, Christ restored joy to us (John 16:22). This is God's will for us to rejoice, hence the Apostle Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). He says this while he is in prison, bound with chains. This is the victory in Christianity: that the joy within us triumphs despite external pains. Joy triumphs over external pains, no matter how severe these pains are. In fact, the pain has become a cause of consolation and joy, since the one in pain finds Christ embracing him "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me" (Songs 2:6). What a sweet fellowship this is! From the sweetness of this fellowship, the Apostle Paul said, "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).

### **And Christ sent us the Holy Spirit.**

1. To establish us in Him by convicting us if we sin (John 16:8) and aiding us (Romans 8:26). Thus, our union with Christ, which begins with baptism and then the sacraments which are the work of the Holy Spirit, remains. Then help to remain steadfast in Christ through conviction and assistance.

2. The presence of Christ within us and our steadfastness in Him makes us alive, and where there is life, there are fruits. And one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy.

3. The Holy Spirit guides us to Christ and tells us about Him (John 16:14). We realize His sweetness when we know Him, and we seek Him out of love when we know Him. This is the meaning of the appearance of the Holy Spirit on the day of baptism in the form of a dove, which symbolizes simplicity.

4. The English word for simplicity is "Single Hearted".

This means we have one goal, which is to turn to Christ, just as the homing pigeon returns to its home. With a single heart, undivided between seeking Christ and seeking sin "My son, give me your heart" (Proverbs 23:26). With this, we remain steadfast in Christ. We do not seek anything else, and Christ is light, so we are enlightened, and we become light (Matthew 6:22).

However, this requires that we do not resist the Holy Spirit ..... so do we listen to Him?!

For man was and still is completely free. **Do you want to get well? (John 5:6).**

### **The sequence of God's work with humans:**

1. God created Adam in His image, and God is love, so Adam's heart was filled with love.

2. God says to my soul in the sons of Adam (Proverbs 8:31). Therefore, Adam, who is in the image of God, loves God and finds his pleasure in God.

3. And joy was the result of this. Therefore, Adam was in the Garden of Eden, and Eden is a Hebrew word that means joy. That is, Adam was living in joy.

4. Adam obeyed God out of love, and a heart that is filled with love is called a "heart of flesh".

Thus, God engraved His commandments on the "heart of flesh" of man, and this is what is called conscience or the natural law.

5. Adam fell, and he began to run away from God. The love of the world started entering the hearts of humans (sons of Adam). Due to the abundance of sin, love grew cold (Matthew 24:12).

The heart turned into a heart of stone, and humans no longer loved God. Joy disappeared, and deceptive pleasure took its place. Man became accustomed to sin and started drinking iniquity like water (Job 15:16).

6. God, who loves humans, knows that sin destroys. He gave man the law as a helper. However, He gave him the law on tablets of stone, reflecting the stony nature of the human heart.

7. God promised man that a day will come when He will turn the heart of stone into a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). Another promise is that He will return and write the commandment on the heart (Jeremiah 31:33). The meaning is the same, the heart of flesh is a heart filled with love, and it obeys God because it loves God (John 14:23).

8. Redemption took place, and the Holy Spirit descended upon the baptized believer, pouring God's love into hearts and transforming them into hearts of flesh. The fulfillment of the commandment became easy (Hebrews 12:1). Everyone who loves Christ obeys him (John 14:15,23).

9. Whoever has the fruits of the Spirit is filled with the love of God, therefore they do not need the commandments of the law, for they are engraved on their heart of flesh, as stated by the Apostle Paul (Galatians 5:22-23). The point is not to abolish the law, but the law is a guide for everyone. However, it is not out of fear of punishment that the commandments are followed, but out of love for God.

# Chapter Four

In chapters (4-11), the Apostle responds to the views and beliefs of the Jews, refuting their arguments. They boast of their physical lineage to Abraham, that they have the law and the scripture, and that they are the chosen people, God's chosen people. From what the Apostle has said, we understand that everyone should only boast of their faith in Christ, as this faith is what justifies them, and so, they have life. The Apostle's words in these chapters (4-11) mean that the Jews should not boast of being children of Abraham in the flesh, or of their law, or of being the chosen people, or of circumcision, etc. but of faith in Christ. With this, they resemble their father Abraham who was justified by faith.

Why did the Apostle Paul specifically choose Abraham? Why not choose Noah or Abel... although these and many others were also righteous?

1. Because the Jews were boasting of Abraham (John 8:33). However, this boasting led to their arrogance and pride without them trying to emulate him.
2. God promised Abraham that He would make him the father of many nations, and this promise was only for Abraham.
3. Abraham is the link between the people of uncircumcision and the circumcised. He lived justified by faith while still in uncircumcision (Genesis 15:6 + Genesis 17:10) and received circumcision as a sign of the covenant. However, he was justified before circumcision, meaning without circumcision. And justified, meaning God declared his righteousness without the deeds of the law, as there was no law in Abraham's time.
4. Paul believes that redemption and justification by faith did not begin with Christ, but they began in the days of Abraham. \* God declared to Abraham that he was justified when he believed. \* God revealed to him the path of justification by showing that God brings life out of death (as Isaac was born from his dead body). The redemption of Christ followed the same pattern, as Christ justifies sinners who are dead in sin. If they believe and repent, they will be brought to life, meaning they will move from death to life = "Your brother was dead and is alive" (Luke 15:32). This justification was by faith just as Abraham was justified. \*The blessing of this life comes from the offspring of Abraham and from Isaac (Genesis 12: 3 & Genesis 17: 21).

## **Abraham's Faith**

Abraham was said to be justified by faith (Genesis 15:6). This was about 25 years before circumcision (Genesis 17:10), and before he offered his son as a sacrifice (Genesis 22). Also, it was about 430 years before Moses' law. This was for the benefit of the nations as they are without the covenant of circumcision and without the law, so it became their right to emulate Abraham who was justified by faith before the law and before the covenant of circumcision, and before the deeds, i.e., offering his son as a sacrifice. Therefore, God called him the father of many nations = Abraham. So, anyone who resembles Abraham in his faith is justified. And Abraham's faith was summarized in the belief that God is capable of bringing life out of death.

1. He left Ur, one of the greatest commercial centers of its time, which was on the bay, to the unknown, he left with the faith that God would give him life.

2. Abraham's faith was evident in the conflict between his men and Lot's men. He left everything to Lot, believing that God would give him life, as Lot and his men took over the good lands, leaving the desert lands for Abraham.

3. Abraham's faith was demonstrated in his belief that God must and will give him Isaac as long as He promised so, even with his old age and the barrenness of Sarah.

4. His faith was demonstrated in offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice, believing that God would raise him up, as God promised him that through Isaac his descendants would be established. Whoever now has faith similar to Abraham's, that God can bring life from death, becomes a son to Abraham by faith. And this is the story of redemption. For any man who is dead in sin, and whoever believes in Christ and is baptized, his old man dies with Christ in baptism and comes out steadfast in Christ and has the life of Christ. This is Abraham's faith, that God brings life from death. So, Abraham's faith coincides with the story of salvation and God's plan for salvation. Even now, whoever is drowning in his sins and wants to live instead of dying as a sinner, must begin by believing that he considers himself dead to sin so that the life of Christ appears in him (Romans 6:11 + 2 Corinthians 4:10-11). The sinner is dead, but God can bring life from this death, just as He brought life from Sarah's dead womb. Indeed, Christ came from a womb where there was no hope of life coming out of it, for it was the womb of a virgin. But the Holy Spirit gave a living body, the body of Christ, in the virgin's womb. In the same way, the Holy Spirit hovers over the waters of baptism, giving life to the baptized, the life of Christ, just as the Holy Spirit in the old times hovered over the waters and life emerged in the world (Genesis 1:2). This is the difference between Isaac and Ishmael in their birth, for Isaac is the son of the promise, not according to nature like Ishmael, but according to what Abraham believed, that God brings life from death. The meaning of Paul's words here is that this is salvation, namely the faith that God brings life from death. And this is for everyone who believes "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11:25). Whoever believes in Christ will have life. God was pleased with Abraham because his faith was in line with God's plan for salvation, so God made Abraham's son a symbol of His Son Jesus Christ, who will give life from death, that's why Paul the Apostle says we are children of the promise like Isaac (Galatians 4:28). And circumcision was an outward sign or seal of Abraham's faith. The seal is a validation of a covenant between two parties. Abraham had been believing in God for many years. Then God came to tell Abraham, "I will put a mark in your body as a witness of your faith" and this sign is circumcision. It's cutting off part of your body and letting it die, and with this sign, you enter into a covenant with me and become part of my people, and whoever enters into a covenant with God and becomes His own will have life. Therefore, this sign is the same as Abraham's faith, it is death (the cut off part of the flesh) and life (Abraham's life when he entered into a covenant with God). Circumcision became a symbol of baptism which is death and life. And this is what the Holy Spirit does, He kills the love of sin in the heart for those who work on killing it, and this is what the Apostle called the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit (Romans 2:29 + Colossians 2:13).

**Verse (1): "What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?"**

**"What then shall we say"** = After what I have said about faith and justification by works, let's take an example, all of you love and know him, who is none other than our father Abraham.

**"Has found"** = What did he benefit from.

**"According to the flesh"** = He means according to his deeds, i.e., circumcision and offering his son as a sacrifice. But why didn't he say according to the deeds instead of saying according to the flesh? [1] He first wants to attack the boasting about deeds, so he gives them an example of Abraham's deeds and what he benefited from them. [2] He wants to attack the Jews who boast about their physical lineage to Abraham, and all they think about is their earthly inheritance of the lands of Canaan, but they do not think about the heavenly inheritance, which they attain by faith, like Abraham. He wants to say to them, what did you get from your physical lineage to Abraham, to boast about it, or from your deeds. If Abraham had boasted of his deeds before God, for example, in leaving Ur, God would have counted this as a debt to him and would have given him a more lavish place than Ur, and the issue would have ended with this. But because of his faith, God made Abraham great on earth and in heaven. And it was said that God justified him by his faith and not by his deeds (Genesis 15:6). And this speech by Paul paves the way for the nations to believe and be justified as well. As for the insistence of the Jews that their affiliation with Abraham is physical, this weakens their connection with him, for the spiritual connection is stronger and it lasts in heaven.

**Verse (2): "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God."**

**"He has something to boast about"** = Anyone who boasts before God implicitly seeks a reward for the work he is proud of.

Abraham was undoubtedly the best of his time, and yet he should not boast before God, neither with his circumcision nor with his good deeds. Why? [1] As for circumcision, it was God who commanded him to be circumcised. [2] God is the one who gave him and gives everyone to do good deeds (James 1:16-17). So, if Abraham or anyone else boasts of his deeds, he is boasting of what is not his, for God is the source of grace (1 Corinthians 4:7). Whoever boasts is letting his left hand know what his right hand is doing. And God is the one who works in us to will and to act (Philippians 2:13), so how can we boast before God when He is the one who did this work in us. [3] Instead, he should boast in his faith in God who gave him all these blessings. If Abraham was compared with his contemporaries among humans, he was the best, but if he boasted, let him boast before people, for example with circumcision, this means that he is in a covenant with God. Or with his deeds, for people care about appearances, (but God cares about the heart). But he should not boast before God with all this, because God is the source of every good work. Instead, he should boast in his faith by which he threw himself into God's arms, to seize the promises from God and be considered righteous in His eyes. Boasting, in general, leads to pride, and pride is the beginning of the fall, and this is the meaning of what the Lord Christ meant that we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing from good deeds, we boast of what God has done through us or in us, and the Lord's commandment to us is that if we do all the righteousness we say we are unprofitable servants so as not to fall into pride.

Example: An engineer who designed a great work or invention, or a doctor who discovered a cure for a stubborn disease, you find that the world honors these geniuses. In fact, they hold beauty pageant contests and give the winner millions. And the question here... who gave these geniuses their minds or this beautiful woman her beauty? It is undoubtedly God, and He is the one who deserves the honor. So, if any of these people boast about themselves, they attribute to themselves what is not theirs. But if they boast in God, that is, that God is the one who bestowed upon them their mind or beauty, and thank God for it, they would have received a heavenly reward. And God made people honor him even more. In fact, if God made people honor someone, this honor would come from genuine appreciation and love.

Those who boast in their own works will only receive earthly recognition. And those who seek reward from God for the service they have rendered to Him will be blessed with earthly blessings in return for their service.

But those who boast in God and believe that it is God who has given them everything they have and everything they have done, and that they were merely instruments in the hands of God, their denial of self, their humility, and their surrender protect them from pride and falling. In fact, they make God dwell with them (Isaiah 57:15). By this faith, they throw themselves into the arms of God and become more steadfast in Him, and they will have a share in the throne of Christ according to the promise of Christ (Revelation 3:21). Moreover, God will not deprive them of the honor of people and the love of people towards them. This is in addition to the infinite possibilities that God bestows upon them, as the Apostle Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

**Verse (3): "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"**

In Genesis 15:6, it is said that "**Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**" This means that his faith was credited to him as if he had fulfilled all the commands of the law. However, if we refer to the Epistle of James (James 2:21-23), we find that he uses the same verse to prove that Abraham was justified by works. But St James the apostle says, "Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect..." So, is there a contradiction between what James said and what Paul said? Absolutely not. Paul is addressing a different issue than what James is addressing. Paul is responding to the Jews who were boasting in their own self-righteousness through their works (like the Pharisee and the tax collector). Paul is saying, don't boast before God about your works. Can you imagine a Jew boasting before God that he is circumcised when it was God who commanded him to do so? If he wants to boast, let him boast before his uncircumcised neighbors (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Additionally, we must understand that every good gift is from above (James 1:16-17).

Spiritually, we must stand before God and declare every righteous deed that we have done, acknowledging that it is You who have given it to us. Even Paul, though a believer, did not shy away from working, as he said, "I have fought the good fight..."

Indeed, James addresses a different point. He responds to those who claim, "I believe," and yet refrain from doing good works. For example, someone who says, "I believe, therefore I will enter heaven." The meaning of James' statement is that if your faith is genuine, it will be evident in your actions. Examples include someone who believes in resurrection, so why do they grieve with despair over the passing of a loved one? Or someone who believes in the heavenly

inheritance and glory, why do they mourn the loss of earthly possessions? Or someone who believes that God is present, why do they act as if God does not see them? These examples illustrate the living faith.

In James' discussion, he emphasizes the importance of having works alongside faith. On the other hand, Paul states that no matter how great your works are, they cannot save you without faith. Without faith, your works are futile. We can understand James' point through the following example: a student enters medical school (like a person who believes in Christ). This student must study diligently to succeed and become a doctor (like a believer who must work alongside their faith). This is the meaning of James' statement. However, a student who does not study will fail and be expelled (and a careless believer will perish). This is what the Lord said, "He who overcomes ... I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life." (Revelation 3:5). Therefore, the meaning of Paul and James' statements is that I must believe first, but after faith, I must not cease from working. Paul was a believer and "fought the good fight" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Paul's works were rooted in faith, for without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). However, after faith, we must work and strive. Paul feared that after his preaching and labor, he himself would be disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:27), and God also feared for him, so He gave him a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Nature itself teaches us this. The earth does not produce loaves of bread, but rather wheat that requires a lot of work to be done to turn it into bread. When the people of Thessalonica became lazy and refused to work, the apostle sent them a message saying, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Nature teaches me to work in order to eat, so why do some teach in the spiritual aspect that grace is sufficient for salvation and there is no need for work? Paul the apostle says, "Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). However, the earth does not give crops without someone planting and watering their land. The book of Genesis teaches us that the earth was desolate because there was no man to work it (Genesis 2:5). And God created Adam to work in the garden and keep it (Genesis 2:15). And as new creatures in Christ, we are created for good works (Ephesians 2:10).

When someone forces themselves (such as praying reluctantly), the grace pours upon them, and they rejoice and find comfort. However, it is important for a person not to boast in their own works because it is God who brings the increase. The farmer does not boast before God that the earth produced crops, for it is God who brings forth the harvest. Perhaps the farmer may boast to their fellow farmer about being more skilled, but not before God. However, this may happen with some of us during times of trial, where we say to God, "I prayed to you and fasted for you... and yet you allowed this trial for me... or you did not give me the good I hoped for." Even though prayer is not a favor we bestow upon God, but rather a favor bestowed upon us by God, allowing us to stand before Him like the angels. We, who in prayer receive dignity, even though we do not deserve it. It is beautiful when Peter said to the Lord, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). So, we should work, but we should always say that we do not deserve it, and we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing, and we should say with David, "O Lord, if Your own we have given You."

In Revelation 2:2, God says, "I know your works..." Therefore, there is no need for you to remind me of them when I begin to reprimand you.

Those who boast about their works, God reckons them as a debt to Him and rewards them greatly. For example, if Abraham had boasted to God about his works, God would have blessed him in his livestock, wealth, children, and his story would have ended there. But what did



Abraham's faith give him? God gave Himself to him, "I am your shield" (Genesis 15:1), and with this, Abraham can rejoice with the bride of the Song of Solomon, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

And the faith that justifies is:

1. Loving God and appreciating His greatness, seeking refuge in Him, and acknowledging that He is the source of all blessings. We should not object or complain against Him, as everything He allows is our path and preparation for heaven.
2. Our belief that He is capable and willing, and even rejoices in justifying the sinner, so we strive without despair.
3. He is the intercessor before the Father who reconciles us with Him and is the Savior.
4. Through Him, we are able to do all things, and through Him, we are transformed from being wicked to righteous saints. He brings life out of death. We make the decision to put to death our sinful desires and present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). We find that grace empowers us to transition from death to life, and heaven rejoices over us. The faith that justifies us means that we accept to die with Christ to sin, and in doing so, we receive the life of Christ. This is the meaning of "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Baptism is: 1) Death with Christ (this is a gift from God). 2) Life of dying to sin (this is my decision of freedom). 3) It is a resurrection with Christ (this is a gift from God and is manifested in us as we continue to die to sin, as seen in 2 Corinthians 4:10-11).

With this we see the harmony between the words of the Apostle Paul and the Apostle James. Without Christ and His justifying work and sacrificial death, all the works in the world would not be able to save us. For one sin according to the law leads to death. Faith in Christ is the beginning of benefiting from the blessings of this redemption. Baptism follows this, symbolizing death and life with Christ. As for works, they involve accepting to live as dead to sin, which we call mortification. In doing so, we receive eternal life in Christ (Romans 6:11-12).

**Verse (4): "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt."**

The phrase "**to him who works**" refers to those who work and boast in their works and demand reward from God for their works (Romans 3:27). Does this mean that we should not work? Absolutely not. It would be a mistake to hold on to one verse and build a doctrine solely based on it. In Luke 10:7, we hear that the doer is worthy of his wages. Also, note the teaching of the Apostle Paul, "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). In Matthew 10:42, anyone who gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones shall by no means lose his reward. In Revelation 14:13, works follow the believers, and in Revelation 20:12-13, the works of individuals are mentioned. However, the key point is that we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing (Matthew 6:3). The Apostle is referring to those who boast in their works before God or think that their works can save them. (Refer to the beauty of the ritual of the Orthodox Church's Divine Liturgy, where we constantly repeat "Lord, have mercy," meaning that we do not deserve anything and we only seek Your mercy, O Lord).

**"The wages are not counted as grace"** = And let's take Abraham as an example:

Abraham is mentioned in Genesis 15:6 as having believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. We never hear of him telling God, "I have done this and that, where is my reward?" He obeyed God in faith and did not ask for a reward. Therefore, his reward was greater

than any creature could imagine. His reward was God Himself, for God said to him in Genesis 15:1, "I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward". Plus, God justified him. For example: An employee earns 20 \$ per day. Suppose he encounters a problem that troubles him, so he says to God, "I have served you for years (the same mistake as the older brother of the prodigal son in Luke 15:29). So why do you allow me to go through this trial?" Here, God counts his service as if God owes him something. God says, "How many days have you served me and what was your wage during them? I will give you more than what you served me." No matter how large the amount is, it is still only a few dollars. Compare this to the reward that Abraham received: God Himself as his shield. Note that the tax collector, who prayed with a sense of unworthiness, was justified because he said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The Pharisee, on the other hand, was not justified. The Pharisee who hosted the Lord of Glory (and spent much on the feast) was not justified, but the sinful woman was justified.

**Verse (5): "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness"**

**"But to him who does not work"** = Compared to the previous verse, this means someone who works but does not boast of his work before God, but instead says to God, "It is You, Lord, who works in me." However, it does not mean that we should not work, otherwise why would the Apostle Paul himself say, "I have fought the good fight" (2 Timothy 4:7)? Here, Paul is responding to the Jews who take pride in their works and their law. We do not boast in our works, but trust that God is the one working in us (John 5:17, Philippians 2:3, 1 Corinthians 9:1, James 2:26).

**A story:** The presenter asked His Holiness Pope Shenouda about his accomplishments during his papacy. He responded, "We are not accustomed to speaking about the works we have done, but rather about the works God has done through us."

**"believe on Him who justifies the ungodly"** means that in the eyes of God, the ungodly are dead. Sin signifies death (Luke 15:32, Revelation 3:1). To believe in Him who justifies the ungodly means to believe that God is able to bring life out of death. This is the same faith that Abraham had. God is able to transform the ungodly into saints. It is said that the great artist Michelangelo used to admire a piece of marble, saying, "How beautiful it is," even though it was still in its raw state. When asked about his admiration for it, he replied, "I do not look at it for what it is now, but for what I can do with it." If Michelangelo could bring forth a magnificent statue from marble, then what can God do with me? He has brought forth holy people from among the pagan nations. This kind of faith, that God justifies the ungodly or brings life out of death, is the gateway to justification (see the introduction). Faith is the door through which we enter into a life of righteousness. To justify the ungodly does not only mean that God forgives their sins, but after forgiving their sins, He continues to work with them and empower them to do righteous works.

**Verses (6-8): "just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:. 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.'"**

**"Their sins are forgiven, and their transgressions are covered"** = In this verse, we see forgiveness for sin and a covering over it, i.e., justification, so the sin is no longer apparent. We also see that forgiveness and covering did not occur as a result of any work. God covered us with His atonement (the blood of the atonement lamb among the Jews). The atonement is through the blood of Christ, which covers us with His atonement. So, what work could ever equate to the blood of Christ? Therefore, what Christ gave us was grace, a free gift that we receive by faith as an entrance. The blood of Christ covered and concealed all our sins. This does not mean that there is no sin, but rather that there is sin, but also a covering. Therefore, justification does not mean the eradication of sin from existence, but rather that God does not count it against us. David does not mention any works in return for this covering, but these sins are forgiven by grace, and their owner receives blessing. Whoever believes and is justified is more qualified for the blessing through which shame is removed and glory comes. David, in this, refers to himself. God covered his sin with His grace, without this justification being in return for good works. Everything that David did when Nathan the prophet confronted him about his sin with Bathsheba was that he confessed his sin and received forgiveness. David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:13). Where did the Lord transfer David's sin? **To Christ.**

God's justification of David was based on His mercy, grace, and love. That is why David sings of the mercies of God, who justified him and did not destroy him.

Indeed, God forgave David's sin by transferring it from him to the head of Christ. But we hear God's judgment ... "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'" (2 Samuel 12:10-12). So why did God punish David even though He had taken away his sin and forgiven him? The sin and the root of sin that had crept into David's heart were still there, dormant and ready to pounce on him and bring him down again and again. But as we said, the condition for justification is that a person must remain dead to sin so that the life of Christ may appear in him. Therefore, what God allowed to happen in David's life afterward, such as his son's adultery with his sister and his son Absalom's conspiracy against him, and even Absalom's intercourse with David's concubines, happened so that David could taste the bitterness of sin and its consequences, hate sin, and return to his former purity and be justified. This is what actually happened, as when they brought him the young woman Abishag the Shunammite, he refused to know her, that is, he refused to intimate with her because all lust had died within him (1 Kings 1:4). David had to submit to God's discipline, trusting in His love and that the Lord disciplines those He loves, and live in gratitude to God for His love and acceptance of his repentance. This is what happened. In fact, he spent the rest of his life weeping over what he had done (Psalm 6). Therefore, he experienced and lived a life of death to his wrong desires that had crept into him, and he returned to his former purity and righteousness.

It is amazing how God, in His love for His children, when one of them fails to walk in the life of mortification, He helps them through trials that enable them to live a life of mortification, and the life of Christ is manifested in them (2 Corinthians 4:1-11). And whoever manifests the life of Christ is justified and delivered. Hasn't God done this with Job and with the Apostle Paul? These trials, as St. Gregory referred to them in the Gregorian liturgy, are the remedies that never fail to

heal our spiritual diseases. They "have bound me to all the remedies that lead to life."

**Verses (9-10): "Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised."**

Therefore, Abraham was justified by faith before circumcision, a period ranging from 14-25 years, and before the law, a period of 430 years. In other words, the blessedness and justification that Abraham received occurred while he was still uncircumcised, before he was circumcised. Therefore, this blessedness is not exclusive to the Jews but also applies to the Gentiles. It is for all who believe (refer to the introduction of this chapter, point 3).

**Verses (11-12): "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised."**

Abraham received the sign of circumcision as an external mark, a seal that affirmed and displayed the nature of his faith and his justification by faith. Abraham believed and was justified while still uncircumcised. In this way, Abraham became a spiritual father to all those who are uncircumcised but believe, and righteousness is imputed to them through faith. He also became a father to the Jews who were not limited to circumcision but also followed in the footsteps of faith that Abraham had while still uncircumcised. The Jews cannot claim to be children of Abraham if they do not walk in his steps and do his works (John 8:39, 44). Similarly, we see that one cannot claim to be a Christian unless they follow in the footsteps of Christ. We also note that Abraham's fatherhood to those who are uncircumcised precedes his fatherhood to those who are circumcised. There is no contradiction between the works of the law (circumcision) and faith. Rather, circumcision came as a seal confirming faith, but it came later. Circumcision became a distinguishing mark for believers among the nations, a sign of their faith, and anyone who bears this mark must commit to faith. We also observe that circumcision signifies that we were born with a corrupt nature that requires spiritual circumcision, symbolized by physical circumcision. This circumcision has become a symbol of baptism. Circumcision is a mark on the body, but it is not for pride; rather, it is a declaration that there is a dead part within us, which is the desire for sin. In this way, anyone who lives in this manner dies for their sins and is able to crucify their body with its passions and desires and live. This is the teaching of the Apostle Paul (Galatians 5:22-24), where the fruits of the Spirit are for those who crucify their bodies and live spiritually. The fruits are for the living person, and as we have seen, the life of Christ is manifested in our mortal bodies, which we subject to death regarding sinful desires (2 Corinthians 4:10-11).

**Verse (13): "For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."**

We have seen before that Abraham was justified by faith while still uncircumcised, and from this we understand that circumcision was not a requirement for justification. Circumcision came after God declared Abraham justified, approximately 14-25 years later. Here, the apostle adds in the following verses that Abraham was also justified without the law. The law was given to Moses by God around 430 years after Abraham, which means that Abraham did not even see the law. The apostle states this in response to the Jews who claim that there is no justification without the law. They want the Gentiles to convert to Judaism, meaning they want them to adhere to the law before becoming Christians.

**"The promise was not through the law"** means that God made a promise to Abraham while he was still uncircumcised and blessed in his offspring, which includes all the nations of the earth (Genesis 22:18). This promise of blessing to Abraham predates the law by 430 years (Galatians 3:17). The meaning of the promise is the coming of Christ, through whom all the nations of the earth are blessed. Paul the Apostle also notes in Galatians 3:16 that the Scripture uses the singular form "Seed" rather than the plural form "Seeds" indicating that it refers to one specific descendant and not all of Abraham's descendants. In Genesis 22, when Abraham believed in God's promise, God expanded the promise by stating that the Christ would come from his offspring. Therefore, the promise made by God to Abraham was never based on the law given through Moses.

**Verse (14): "For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect"**

The promise to Abraham that he would inherit was mentioned in Genesis 15:4-5.

The promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring was mentioned in Genesis 18:18.

Both promises were made to Abraham before the law, approximately 430 years prior. The promises of God were based solely on Abraham's faith. If we were to say that there were other conditions for the fulfillment of the promise, such as the law, it would imply that the promise remained void for 430 years until the law came through Moses. However, the promise did not require anything other than faith. Furthermore, even Abraham himself did not benefit from the law since there was no law during his time. No person was able to fully adhere to the law, so does this mean that the promise of God was meaningless and not applicable? Even Moses, the one who gave the law, did not fully comply with it.

**Verse (15): "because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression."**

The law is complete and holy, and there is no fault in the law itself. However, due to human weakness, there was no one who could fully comply with the law. Therefore, anyone who commits a transgression in the presence of the law is going against God's commandments, and this angers God. When it says that **"the law brings about wrath,"** it means that when someone breaks even one commandment, it is enough to provoke God's anger. Without the law, people may still sin, but anger arises more prominently when there is a law in place. Without the law,

one might try to justify themselves by claiming ignorance, but after God gave the law, what excuse does a person have? With the presence of the law, sin becomes not only a sin, but it also became a **transgression** i.e., a violation of the law (Galatians 3:10).

We observe that the promises were made in the context of Abraham's faith, not the law. The law is like a legal system that does not reward those who do not commit murder but rather punishes those who do. Blessings can be seen as a type of reward. Thus, we find that God gives rewards and blessings without the law, whereas the law curses and passes judgment on those who transgress it, leading to death. This is why the Apostle Paul said that the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

**Verse (16): "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all"**

"**Therefore it is of faith**" refers to the promise mentioned in verse 14.

"**Through faith**" means that the promise was given because of Abraham's faith. But why did God give the promise based on faith?

1. "**that it might be according to grace**" means that the promise was given as a result of God's undeserved favor and not based on any debt. If God had given the promise to Abraham based on his works, then it would have been a form of material compensation (livestock and wealth) to compensate him for leaving Ur.
2. "**So that the promise might be sure**" means that the promise was made secure and steadfast. The covenant based on works was not secure or steadfast because of the continuous weakness and fallibility of humanity. Therefore, it is a grave mistake to think that we can enter heaven based on our good works, prayers, and fasting. If blessings were dependent on works, they would not be secure and steadfast because no one is perfect. That is why we continually cry out, "Lord, have mercy". This is the Orthodox Christian approach as seen in the liturgy.
3. "**To all the seed**" indicates that if the promise was based on the law, it would have been limited to the Jews (Romans 4:9). However, when it is based on faith, both Jews and Gentiles can benefit from it. That is why God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5). He becomes the father of all those who share his faith, meaning anyone whose faith resembles that of Abraham. This shows that God is able to bring life out of death and that through faith in Christ, one can have life after the death of sin. Thus, Abraham becomes the father of us all.
4. If the promise by the law brought wrath and curse, and everyone fell into transgression, then the law keeps us away from inheriting the promises. Therefore, it was by faith to lift the ban.

**Verse (17): "As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations' in the presence of Him whom he believed; God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did"**

In the previous verse, it was stated that Abraham became the father of us all. Here, it explains why. It is because God said to him, "**I have made you a father of many nations**" (Genesis 17:5). "**In the presence of Him**" means that God sees the future as if it were happening now.

This is why we say that God is timeless. It means that for God, there is no past, present, or future, but everything is present before Him. Therefore, God saw the nations who would believe in the same faith as Abraham as if they were standing before Him while He was speaking to Abraham. God told Abraham that he would become the father of the nations who would believe in the future. So, God saw these nations who would believe as if they were present before Him. In God's perspective, we have become children of Abraham. When God said to Abraham, "**I have made you a father of many nations**", He considered that we would become Abraham's children through our faith and inherit his blessings. This applies to everyone who believes in the same way as Abraham did, "**who gives life to the dead**". Abraham believed that God could revive Sarah's barren womb, create something from nothing, and restore Isaac even after offering him as a burnt offering (Hebrews 11:19). Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, and He raised the pagan nations from the death of sin through faith. In the same way, God can raise every sinner from the death of sin (as in the story of the prodigal son: "This my son was dead and is alive again" (Luke 15:24) + Ephesians 2:5 + Ephesians 5:14 + Matthew 3:9. In Matthew 3:9, it is shown that life can be raised from dead stones. If God has given us existence from nothing, would He not care for us now that we exist?

**"And calls those things which do not exist as though they did"** means that all the dead Gentile nations who believed, God saw them thousands of years ago as alive through their faith. He saw them as children of Abraham, and Abraham became their father through faith. The fact that Abraham became the father of many nations means that it includes the Gentile nations, not just the Jews. The things that do not exist refer to the Gentile nations who entered faith. God, in His foreknowledge, was already saying to Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, and He saw them as if they already existed.

**Verse (18): "who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.'"**

God gave promises to Abraham, and Abraham believed and had hope that he would have descendants through Sarah. This hope was contrary to natural hope because Abraham had reached an age where he had lost hope of having a son, and Sarah was barren and unable to conceive. In the same way, let us have faith that God is able to fulfill His promises no matter what obstacles we face. God rejoices when we have hope to become saints, not just to overcome a particular sin. God is able to heal our nature if we have the faith of the woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of His garment. If we ask with unwavering faith, God will respond.

**Verse (19): "And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb."**

Because he was not weak in his faith, he did not consider the limitations of his own body or the fact that Sarah's womb was no longer able to bear children. In the same way, believers should not measure God's ability based on human reasoning. Instead, we should recognize that the strength that God gave to Abraham continued with him, and he was able to father children even in his old age with Keturah. It is a lack of faith that leads a person to focus on obstacles and problems.

**Verse (20): "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God"**

Doubt and uncertainty come from the mind and the doubts that fill it. The word "waver" is associated with sin (Romans 14:23, James 1:6-7). It represents a state of disbelief. When a person entertains doubt, certainty comes to fill the void that doubt occupied. Notice that a heart filled with trust glorifies God. God is glorified in faith. Abraham did not entertain any doubt in the promise of God.

**"Was strengthened in faith"** means that his thoughts and heart were anchored in God as a refuge. And whoever does this, their faith increases and becomes stronger. Those who start with weak faith can strengthen it through training and increasing their trust in God.

### **How does God strengthen a person's faith?**

God wants to strengthen the faith of every individual. However, this is for those who respond to God.

This response can be:

1) - By spending long periods of time with God in prayer, studying, meditating on, and reciting verses from the Holy Scriptures. Through this, we get to know Him, love Him, and trust in Him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who takes from what is Christ's and tells us. In the quiet, lengthy sessions that we spend meditating on the Scriptures and praying, we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

2) - By giving thanks during trials (Colossians 2:7), as they are permitted by God, and when we witness His wonderful works, our faith increases.

God starts with a person with a simple trial, and if the person does not complain but thanks God, they see His hand and His strength supporting them, and their faith begins to grow. Then God allows a harder trial and so on. As this person observes God's work with them amid trials, they experience God's extraordinary assistance and God's comfort in their afflictions, and their faith increases and grows.

We find the disciples of Christ asking the Lord, saying, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). And the Apostle Paul thanks God because he found that the faith of the Thessalonians was growing (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

This is what God did with His people after He brought them out of Egypt. They began to know God when He struck the Egyptians and when He parted the sea. To move them from the level of seeing to the level of faith, God enrolled them in the school of faith. The Lord began to test the people when they were thirsty and needed water; they found bitter water. Instead of crying out to God, who they had seen work before, they complained. If they had cried out, they would have seen the hand of God, and their faith would have increased. The trials continued, but the people of Israel did not learn, instead they complained! And complaining hardens the heart. Conversely, thanksgiving makes the heart soft, flexible, and ready for God's work, which works on growing faith inside the heart as the grateful person sees the hand of God. Note that the trial is not for God to know what is inside a person's heart, for He is the examiner of hearts and minds. The trial is for me to see the hand of God and my faith grows. The trial is like what happens in schools, where after theoretical lessons, practical experiments are conducted for the students to reinforce the lesson in their minds.

And we find that what the people of Israel failed at in the wilderness, Abraham did not fail, and



let's see God's approach with him: -.

1) God called Abraham to leave Ur (Acts 7:2-3) and he followed God without questioning "how will I live". When he found that God was providing for him, his faith was strengthened.

However, he got stuck in Haran because of his father (Acts 7:4). When his father died, God called him again to leave Haran. Since Abraham's faith had grown, he responded to God and followed Him, whom he trusted, into the unknown.

2) A conflict arises between Abraham's shepherds and Lot's shepherds. Lot chooses the good land and leaves the bad land for Abraham. Abraham didn't doubt or question "how will I live" but said in his heart "God, who arranged the past, will not abandon me". This came true and Abraham's faith grew stronger.

3) God promises Abraham a progeny and Abraham believes that God is capable because he had seen His works before. Abraham didn't say "how" and we are incapable, Sarah and I.

4) After Abraham's faith had grown to this extent, we find the most difficult trial for Abraham, which was to offer his son as a sacrifice. He did not ask "how will he live again". But he did it because his faith allowed it. He believed that even if he sacrificed his son, God would resurrect him (Hebrews 11:19). "God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear" (1 Corinthians 10:13). With this, Abraham deserved to symbolize the Father who gave His Son. This is exactly what happened with Joseph, as God allowed him to go through severe trials, but what did Joseph become afterwards.

Indeed, those whom God wants for great tasks, He tests them with many trials, not to know what's in their heart, but to qualify them for the task they will undertake.

**Verse (21): "and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."**

As his faith strengthened, he became more certain that God would do what He promised.

**Verse (22): "And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"**

Let's review the elements of Abraham's faith.

1. God gives life to the dead and calls things that do not exist as though they did.

2. Against hope, he believed in hope.

3. He did not consider the deadness of his own body or the deadness of Sarah's womb as an obstacle preventing God's promise from being fulfilled.

4. He did not doubt God's promise but was fully convinced that God would do what He promised. This trust and this faith are what justifies, it is the introduction to justification (the introduction).

5. After this, he accepted to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, believing that God would give Isaac life after that, and Isaac returned alive. Moreover, he received the promise and grace to become the father of Christ, to whom Isaac was a symbol (Gen 22: 15-18). The deeds required from us are to accept to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice so that Christ may live in us.

Indeed, the beginning of Abraham's justification was his faith (Genesis 15). The entrance to justification is faith, as taught by the Apostle Paul. Afterward, Abraham continued with his works and offered Isaac as a sacrifice. Thus, the life of justification continued because his faith

was alive and evident in the act of offering his son, believing that God would raise him again (Hebrews 11:19). This is the teaching of the Apostle James, that works involve accepting and obeying God's commandments, believing that in this obedience, there is life. This is living faith (James 2:22).

**Verse (23): "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him"**

In conclusion of the chapter, what was said about Abraham is applied to us so that we may become children of Abraham and be justified by faith.

**Verse (24): "but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead"**

"**Shall be imputed to us**" is written in the future tense. So, whoever believes, throughout all days and until the end of time, will be justified. And justification continues in the Church.

**Verse (25): "who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."**

"**Who was delivered up**" means that He willingly surrendered Himself, as it was the will of the Father, to atone for our sins. This can be compared to when Jesus said, "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). And He was raised to give us His life and righteousness, working in us. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us to raise us from spiritual death (Ephesians 1:19). The death of sin now, and then the death of the body in the general resurrection. Christ fulfilled our debts through His death, and through His resurrection, He bestowed His righteousness upon us, as we bear the new life established within us. From this verse, we understand that salvation occurs in two stages, compare this verse with Romans 5:10. The two verses have the same meaning. Then, we can compare baptism to these two stages (Romans 6:3-5).

1 <sup>st</sup> stage	2 <sup>nd</sup> stage
1- <b>Who was delivered up because of our offenses</b> (Rom4:25). 2- <b>For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son."</b> (Rom5:10). 3- <b>Through baptism</b> we die with Christ (Rom6:3-5).	1- <b>Raised because of our justification</b> (Rom 4:25) 2- <b>Much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."</b> (Rom5:10). 3- <b>Through baptism</b> we rise with Christ (Rom6:3-5).

**Salvation occurs in two stages:**

1. **Forgiveness of sins:** This was accomplished when Christ was delivered to death for us,

bearing our sins, so that we may be reconciled to the Father. Through baptism, we die with Christ, and our sins are forgiven (for one who dies during the trial, the case is dropped). By dying with Christ in baptism, our sins and the judgment of death are removed from us, and we are reconciled with God. In our death with Christ, the execution of the law, which governs the death of the sinner, is fulfilled in us. The law has received its due through the death of the sinner. However, this situation is similar to a person who stole bread to eat, and he was convicted. Then someone came and paid for the bread on his behalf, and he was acquitted. But if he were to come out of prison, he would steal again to eat because of his hunger. Therefore, the resurrection was given to us by Christ to give us His life so that we may walk in righteousness.

**2. Justification**, which is the forgiveness of sins, is indeed the judgment of acquittal. However, through resurrection with Christ in baptism, He gives us His life and righteousness, so that we may walk in righteousness and not fall again. We rise into a new life (Romans 6:4). Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20), and as He lives in us, we become righteous. In Christ, the resurrection becomes our own, as He has given us His resurrected life. The Holy Spirit, whom we receive in the Sacrament of Confirmation, establishes us in Christ, and His life is established in us, enabling us to live in righteousness. However, this is for those who willingly surrender their members to Christ, in whom Christ has given us His life. Those who surrender their members to Christ become instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13), which Christ uses, for an instrument is used by a person to accomplish something. The Holy Spirit grieves if we allow our members to be used as instruments of sin by the enemy of good. This is the meaning of "convicts of sin." Likewise, "convicts of righteousness" refers to anyone who refuses to surrender their members to Christ for His use. Those who respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit are assisted by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26) and are established in Christ, living in eternal life.

**Therefore, baptism is death and resurrection with Christ.**

**In death, we reconcile with the Father as our sins are forgiven.**

**And in the resurrection, we receive the life of Christ, and we are saved by His life.**

And this is what we will see in Chapter 5, Verse 10.

# Chapter Five

**Verse (1): "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"**

"**Therefore**" = Then this verse is related to what precedes it. The last verse in the previous chapter was about how we were justified. "**having been justified**" = (refer to the introduction). "**By faith**" = this is the entrance. "**We have peace with God**" = There is peace from God, and it is an internal peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). But peace with God, this means a complete change in our position from a state of enmity to a state of sonship, friendship, and love. We hide in Christ to be considered righteous in him and reconciled, which means reconciliation with God "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). We live as sons in true peace with the Father. **Example:** A treacherous wife was expelled by her husband and became homeless, even he handed her over to the court to discipline her (this was our condition before Christ) and she was acquitted by the court (this equals "He was delivered up because of our offenses" Romans 4:25). But she was still homeless. If her husband returned her to her home, her children and her previous status to live in peace with her family (= peace with God) and this was through the resurrection of Christ (was raised to life for our justification). So, by the resurrection, we united with Christ. We became sons of God. "**Through our Lord Jesus Christ**" = All that we have obtained was through the redemption of Christ. If Christ has done all this and if we have believed, then why do some people are in a state of dispute with God, why hasn't everyone established in this righteousness and peace? The answer simply is that faith is the entrance, but after faith, there is a required struggle. A negative struggle so we don't return to our previous life and our old sins but live a life of mortification (elective death) after our death with Christ in baptism. And a positive struggle in prayers and fasting. To maintain the state of peace.

**Verse (2): "through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."**

Time is no longer terrifying. As for the past... we remember Christ's death for us. And the present... we are in peace. And the future... we live in hope of the glory of God. And by faith, we carried Christ and were brought into a state of **grace** = union with Christ / indwelling of the Holy Spirit / future glory in the future and invisible glory now / peace with God, meaning we have become members of God's household (the church).

"**Access into**" = means that we were not in this state before faith, as we were born by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). And Christ transferred us from the state of wrath and sin in which we were born to the grace to which we have become.

"**Stand**" = means the continuity of this grace here and in heaven, it is a right acquired in this life and forever, we have become children of God, and nothing will expel me from this sonship except my own abandonment of my father's house. It is a right that no one can take away from

me, neither death nor the devil, but death will confirm this grace as we will partake in the divine glory.

**"And rejoice in hope of the glory of God"** = This current state in which we stand, which is a matter of pride for believers, because we expect and hope based on it for what God will grant of glory to believers later. Thus, justification and sanctification end with the glorification declared in heaven.

**Verses (3-5): "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;. and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."**

**"But we also glory in tribulations"** = Notice that he was talking about glory, but before we imagine that we have reached glory, he reminds us that we are still on the land of misery (The Tent of Meeting, which symbolizes the church on earth, its walls and ceiling are extremely beautiful, but its floor is dust. This means that while we are in the church now, when we contemplate the sky we rejoice in its beauty, but we remember that we are still on earth with its pains, but contemplating the sky gives joy and comfort. As for the sky, it is represented by the temple and its floors are of gold, there is no pain in the sky). The meaning is that there must be pain while we are on earth. But why do we glory in pain? Suppose God gave me a gift, and I rejoiced with it, I must thank God for His love. And distress and pain are also signs of God's love for me "For whom the Lord loves He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6). And this discipline is to prepare me for heaven, so we glory in tribulations for they are a sign of love and let us understand that God is a maker of good things, he can only allow what is good. So, distress is good even if we do not understand now but we will understand later (John 13:7) like a failing son whose father brought a rod for discipline, and he succeeded and became a bright man. Such a man will always pride himself on this rod all his life, for it is the reason for his glory. With the same concept, Job now in heaven remembers his pains with all pride, for they are the reason for his entry to glory. Therefore, we must now, by faith, glory and thank God for the tribulations for they are the path to glory, they produce an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17) generally: God does not allow anything in my life unless it is necessary for the salvation of my soul (1 Corinthians 3:21-22). Therefore, we thank him as a maker of good things. And tribulations, with this concept, are a good thing we thank him for.

**"Knowing that tribulation produces perseverance"** = Patience here is not about exercise nor human courage nor nerve calmness or waiting for material compensation. But patience is a divine gift. God does not remove tribulations, but gives us to rise above them, God changes the mind and heart, so we accept tribulations, as we see them necessary for salvation, even they are the path of fellowship with the suffering Christ. As for the children of the world, the abundance of tribulation wastes their patience. **But when does the gift of patience come amidst tribulation?**

1. I must think like this: If you, Lord, have endured all this for me, then let me endure with you, Lord, to be partners in pain, and partners in pain are partners in glory (Romans 8:17). Let us be like a mother whose son is in pain and she says, "I wish I were in your place." Therefore, in our tribulations, we must contemplate the pains of Christ and say, I wish I were instead of you... and by this, we bear the pain. The more love increases, the more desire for pain with Christ increases.

This is what drove the martyrs to pain, and after the era of martyrdom ended, the era of monasticism began out of love to share the pain of Christ. And notice that God is still suffering because of human sins.

2. If we understand that God uses pain as a tool of purification and preparation for heaven, we will understand that pain is a gift from God as said by the Apostle Paul (Philippians 1:29). So, pain is a tool for good, for the salvation of the soul, and fellowship with the suffering Christ in pain and in glory.

3. I must not let a word of complaint come out of my mouth, but constant thanks, for pain is a sign of love from God (Hebrews 12:6). I must be silent and bear the pain without a single word of complaint. And whoever does this, the divine gift, which is patience, pours inside him as a divine grace, in addition to correcting the internal corruption, which God allowed because of this pain, that is, with thanksgiving and endurance, the trial comes with its fruits. Also, with thanksgiving, faith grows (Colossians 2:7) and when faith grows, trust in God's permission for good increases. Here comes the surrender to God and the acceptance of the trial with gratitude.

**Example:** A patient needing surgery must first be anaesthetized for the operation to succeed, but if the operation is performed while he is awake, the operation will fail. This patient is me, God wants to heal me from a spiritual disease, and this is done by the pain that God allows, so if I am silent without complaining (this would be like being anaesthetized) the treatment succeeds. And vice versa. And not just refraining from complaining but giving thanks amidst distress. And this is the faith that God only allows good. And it is not important to understand (John 13:7).

4. If we understand all of this, let's surrender our lives to God, that is, we do not object to what He allows and here comes the grace of patience.

And Saint John says in his revelation "I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9). And this is the meaning of the verse "His left hand is under my head (distress) and his right hand embraces me (comforts)" (Song of Songs 2:6) + An example of the three young men in the fiery furnace (Book of Daniel), God's way is not to get me out of trouble, but to come and carry the cross with me and this is the comfort. And by this, patience means steadfastness and endurance, and endurance is due to divine comforts and conviction that what God allows is for good, and divine comforts are for those who thank God and seek help.

And those who see the children of God in their comforts amidst tribulations may say that they are not in pain. This is like someone asking a person to carry another person in water, then he will say I can't because he does not understand the law of buoyancy. But if he tried, he would carry him easily because the water carries with him. Similarly, those who see the children of God amidst their tribulations do not understand how they endure the pain, where does this patience come from?

And the answer is that Christ carries with them, or rather, He carries them. Therefore, it is an invisible strength to others, but it is felt by the believer who suffers but with gratitude, and this is the meaning of "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:30). And when the trial comes, a person may be afraid, or we may be afraid now that a trial may come upon us. But this feeling is natural. Like the feeling of thirst when the body lacks water, but the feeling of thirst drives me to search for water, so I live. And the feeling of fear drives me to seek refuge in God to protect me, so I find comfort. But without seeking refuge in God, comfort will not come. Refer to (2 Corinthians 12:5-10). God always brings sweetness (comforts and patience) out of the barren (pain), and even the improvement of my nature as preparation for my entry into heaven.

"**And perseverance, character**" = **Character** is a person's success in an exam and his successful passing of it. In the world, someone who successfully passes an exam ascends to a higher level, that is, he increases and rises in his level. Similarly, whoever endures pain succeeds in his examination and gets rid of his impurities, for which God allowed the trial, so character means getting rid of impurities, like purifying gold with fire (1 Peter 1:6-7). So, whoever faces tribulations with steadfastness without complaining, God gives him patience and comforts, and if he endures his pains, he becomes purified, that is, he becomes purified and his spiritual level rises. And he continues to rise with tribulations until he shares with Christ in his glory. Therefore, the children of God understand that salvation from distress is not the end of distress, but their rise above it, and with the comforts that fill them, they pass through the distress, confident that it is for their good, and the comforts of Christ accompany them in it. In fact, those who suffer patiently receive the greatest comfortable experiences that are not experienced by those without trials. Therefore, tribulations are called a test, as gold is tested by fire to purify it.

"**And character, hope**" = With pain, comforts increase and purity increases, and whoever purifies can see God (Matthew 5:8) therefore Saint Paula the Egyptian monk said, "Those who run away from affliction, run away from God". And with the increase of comforts, and with purity, we can see God, that is, we feel His love and fatherhood (and these are not experienced by anyone but the suffering). And with this, hope increases in this kind God who gives us comfort. Therefore, St James the Apostle demands us to rejoice in trials (James 1:2, 12). And character is not the basis of hope, but its companion. And the more character increases, that is, the more a person purifies, his eyes open and his hope increases. And the more a person purifies, the gifts of the Spirit increase so faith, love, and hope increase. **Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts...** A person may ask.. and how can we know that God is still generous in His gifts, or what is the evidence that God will let me enter heaven? We have hope within us, so what confirms it? The clear answer here is that hope will not put us to shame if the heart is filled with love for God, but rather that man has discovered the love of God, "We love him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). And this is the work of the Holy Spirit, who testifies to Christ (John 14:16). He gives me to understand the extent of His love for me, and He gives me to be filled with His love, for He pours His love generously into the heart. So if we find this love filling the heart, our hope will not put us to shame, because it is certain that we have a share in heaven, for love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8) and this love turns into joy that fills the heart, overpowers any pain, and love turns not only for God, but for every human being, even our enemies, and turns to lust to spend all our days and times with God, and in obedience to His commandments. And God gives this love abundantly = **poured out** = so it is a love that inflames our hearts, a fiery love for God. And this love gives confidence in His promises, and this increases hope. This love is what drove the martyrs to martyrdom out of love for Christ. This love gives us pleasure in carrying out the difficult commandments and enduring pains, and this is the meaning of the Lord's saying to carry my yoke for it is light, for Christ whom we love carries all the load for us. This love and this hope are the opposite of the false reassurance that some people have, who say that we will be saved because we are Christians. My affiliation by name to Christ is not enough. And the test... can we endure distress with patience, does the heart continue in its love with the loss of material goods, do we obey the commandments, because of our love in Christ are we ready to leave the evils and pleasures of the world? Such people do not taste fiery love, but they are those whom the book said about them that they are reassured without reason for reassurance (Isaiah 47:8, 10 + Daniel 8:25). So, whoever still clings to his flesh does not have the right to be reassured.

**Because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

1. God is love (1 John 4:8). This means that love is the essence of God and He shines it everywhere and in every direction. And for all creation.

2. And before there was creation, the Father was pouring out this love for the Son, so we hear in (Ephesians 1:6) that the Son is the "Beloved".

3. And the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, carrying love from the Father to the Son.

4. Through incarnation and redemption, Christ united with us and became the Holy Spirit who carries the love from the Father to the Son, carries this love to those who are united with the Son and have become sons.

5. When the love of God was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we came to love God as expressed by Apostle Paul in (Romans 8:35-39).

6. The sign of this love is keeping the commandment (John 21:14-15).

7. The love in the heart transforms it from a stony heart to a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19).

8. Thus, instead of the commandments being written on stone tablets as in the Old Testament, they became written on the hearts with love (Jeremiah 31:31-33). Therefore, whoever loves God keeps His commandments. This is like a wife who loves her husband; she does not need someone to tell her the commandment "do not commit adultery"

(Galatians 5:23), for her love for her husband, she cannot think of betraying him.

And we notice the work of the Trinity with us, the Father gives us fatherly love "Our Father who art in heaven" and the Son is the bridegroom of our souls and He is like the firstborn among His brothers. So, the Father and the Son give us all types of love that the soul needs. As for the Holy Spirit, it gives us to love God intensely. And with this, we become balanced. Psychology says that a person is not balanced unless he loves and is loved. This is how we understand how a monk lives in his solitude.

**Comment.**

The Holy Spirit gives:

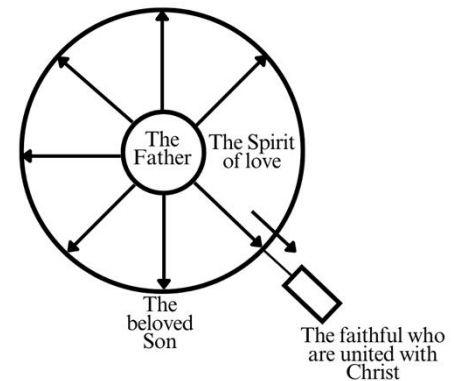
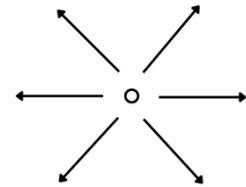
1. Love for God.
2. To feel God's love for us.

Regarding the first one, Apostle Paul said, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ..." (Romans 8:35).

As for the second one, Apostle Paul said:

1. "The love of Christ compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).
2. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" (Galatians 4:6).

And whoever exchanges this love with God strengthens his hope, i.e., his hope for salvation, and certainly, this hope does not disappoint. Can anyone who has tasted this love imagine that God would reject him afterward and cast him into hell? To reach this level of love, we must be filled





with the Spirit that pours this love into the heart. And this requires struggle (Ephesians 5:18-21).

**Verse (6): "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."**

In verse 5 we saw the Holy Spirit pouring God's love into us. And here we see the work of the Holy Spirit, how does He pour out love? The Holy Spirit gives us an understanding of Christ's love 1) by opening our eyes to see the ugliness of our sins. The Holy Spirit's method is persuasion (Jeremiah 20:7), He convinces the believer of Christ's love for him by opening his eyes to his sin. 2) The more we feel our sin, the more we will appreciate what Christ has done for us. He died for the ungodly to forgive them, renew their nature, establish them in Christ, and make them loved by God. The one who is forgiven more, loves more (Luke 7:47). 3) The Holy Spirit does not only provide intellectual knowledge, but experiential knowledge, through which we experience the love of Christ. We love Him because He loved us first and the Spirit paints a vivid picture of the cross of Christ that forgives all our sins, ignites the heart with His love, and we desire to respond to this love with love.

"**Christ**" = translates as "more importantly, Christ." "**when were still without strength**" = unable to save ourselves from sin, which has overwhelming authority over us (as an example of this... the people of Israel in Egypt had no hope of escaping from the slavery of Pharaoh, and God sent Moses to them, and the slavery to Pharaoh is a symbol of slavery to the Devil). Thus, God sent Christ to us in our land of slavery. "**In due time Christ died for the ungodly**" = that is, in the fullness of time when the law had fulfilled its task, and when the failure of the Jews to comply with the law was revealed. Notice that people have reached in their sin to become **ungodly**. And yet, Christ died for them.

**Verse (7): "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die."**

**Jewish definition: Righteous man** = one who says to his friend "what is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours" (i.e., he rules with justice). **Good man** = one who says, "what is mine is yours," thus he is capable of giving. **Christian definition:** righteousness is through Christ, and goodness is by carrying Christ within us. And the meaning of the verse is that it is difficult and with effort that someone would die for a good or righteous person. But Christ demonstrated His love in that He died for us while we were sinful and ungodly.

**Verse (8): "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."**

Is there a greater love than this, that Christ died to appease the Father towards this world and the sinful man (1 John 4:10)?

**Verse (9): "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved**

**from wrath through Him."**

The meaning is not to find salvation difficult now, it is easier now after the cross. Which is easier, the salvation of Rome, which used to offer humans to beasts for entertainment, or its salvation now? In the same concept, my salvation is easier now. We should not believe the devil, who suggests to us that salvation is difficult. For if God transformed the beasts of Rome into saints, won't He transform me now into a saint? Christ died for the ungodly who had never heard of Him before, to justify and save them, so wouldn't He seek my salvation now?

**"We shall be saved"** = Salvation in Paul's view is a continuous action that began with the cross and does not end, so he uses 3 verbs in the past, present, and future tenses to express salvation.

1. **Past:** "For we were saved in this hope" (Romans 8:24).

2. **Present continuous:** "By grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:5, 8).

3. **Future:** This verse + (Romans 10:13 + 1 Corinthians 3:15).

Therefore, the work of salvation began with the birth of Christ and ends with His second coming. And my salvation began with baptism, or with faith for those who are baptized when they are older, and it will continue until we put on the glorified body in heaven (Revelation 12:10).

**Verse (10): "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."**

See the interpretation of verse (Romans 4:25). Christ came to make peace with God by pleasing God with His obedience unto death, so we were reconciled to God through His death. Through baptism, we die with Him and by His blood our sins are covered. We are also saved by His life, meaning by His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to glory with His Father.

**"We shall be saved by His life"** means:

1. He gave us His life, which became our strength to walk in righteousness. Christ uses our members as instruments of righteousness. This life is the one by which He triumphed over sin and death. He lives in us, and we are filled with the grace of His life. The more we surrender ourselves to death, the more His life appears in us (Hebrews 7:24- 25 + Galatians 2:20 + Philippians 1:21 + 2 Corinthians 4:11).

2. Christ stands before the Father to intercede for us, to carry us in Him into the Father's embrace.

3. This life is eternal; Christ will not die again. Therefore, if we die physically, we will rise. The life He gave us is eternal (like a seed buried in the ground, but after a while it emerges as a beautiful tree).

**Verse (11): "And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."**

**Rejoice** = We will see in verse 15 how much love is shown in God's gifts and the redemption we have seen. The more our eyes are opened to God, His love, His greatness, and His glory, the more we rejoice that we belong to Him. Indeed, we rejoice in His great love for us and that we have become His children. God has become the subject of our love and pride. We rejoice in God more than in His gifts. Knowing God and realizing His love that surrounds us (2 Corinthians

5:14) leads to loving Him (Romans 8:35-39). This mutual love leads to a life of joy (and this was the condition of the Garden of Eden, and Eden means joy).

However, no one can reach this unless they know God, realize His love and His fatherhood, then their heart will be filled with love for God, for God truly deserves this love. This knowledge, and therefore this love, comes:

1. By contemplating His love and His redemption for me, the sinner.
2. Through a long fellowship with Him to know Him.
3. By earnestly seeking the Holy Spirit to fill us, for the Spirit is the one who reveals Christ to us (John 16:14). And when we discover the sweetness of the person of Christ, we will love Him. Therefore, it is said that the Holy Spirit is the one who pours God's love into our hearts (Romans 5:5).
4. By implementing His commandments, for he who resists and does not implement the commandments is resisting the Spirit, even quenching it.

**Verse (12): "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned"**

Verse 11 ended with us having received reconciliation. Here, the Apostle continues to explain what reconciliation means. The Apostle begins by explaining how sin entered and what are the effects of sin and what death sin brought.

"**Just as**" = Paul says this humbly, acknowledging that he does not fully understand all the effects of sin. He only sees the spread of sin and death (see the study on Apostle Paul's thoughts on salvation in the introduction).

In the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil, we say, "O God the Great and The Eternal ... who formed man in incorruption," and we understand from this that sin is alien to the human race... **then sin entered the world through one man**, Adam. **And by sin came death** = because sin is separation from God. There is no fellowship between light and darkness. We inherited from Adam a nature open to sin and to the devil, meaning we have become prone to sin. The possibility of sin is there, but it is not inevitable, evidenced by the existence of righteous figures like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Job. God called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob alive. But Adam handed us a nature that knows good and evil and tends to evil, and it does not have a great power to resist it. Notice Paul's saying "**because all have sinned**" = everyone sinned and dies by his own personal responsibility and the meaning is directed to us. There is no need to say that Adam is the cause of our death because everyone has sinned. We note that man did not inherit a nature doomed to fall, otherwise God would not condemn him. That's why God said to Cain about sin, "its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." (Genesis 4:7). We note that we die not by Adam's sin, but by Adam's nature and because of our own sins that we commit by our own will. We sin in Adam's nature and by our own will. Thus, sin became widespread in human nature. I was in Adam when he sinned, so I am part of him, so in Adam I fell and died. I inherited his sin and its effects, and I started to sin because of this weak, corrupt nature. But note also that just as by one sin death entered all, so by Christ's righteousness and redemption life became for everyone who believes, as long as he remains steadfast in Him, so the Lord says "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4).

"**And thus death spread to all men**" = Death entered humans, and it did not say it entered animals, so animals and birds were dying and plants were withering. But Adam was created to

live eternally. The animals would die in front of him to give him a lesson: what death would he be subjected to if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**Verse (13): "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law."**

Before the law, sin existed and was deadly, but man could excuse himself by claiming ignorance. But after the law, sin became transgression, so it became deadly:

[1] Because it is a sin. [2] Because it is a transgression against God's law.

**"Sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed"** = meaning it is not considered transgression.

Before the law, sin was widespread but not known or defined by a written law, and the law came to surround it. But even before the law, death was inflicted on everyone because of Adam's sin and everyone's mistakes. Death is a natural result of sin, but after the law, the punishment became greater because of sin + transgression, hence it was said of those who reject the disciples' invitation "it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment" (Matthew 10:15). As an example: perhaps my son may behave wrongly which causes anger, but if I tell him one day not to do something and then he disobeys, the anger will be much greater. Or smoking was a mistake (for a person to burn his money on nothing), but now after knowing that cigarettes cause cancer, the one who smokes is not only burning his money, but also his health, he is like committing suicide. The medical discovery of the harm of cigarettes is similar to the work of the law, which diagnosed and defined sin.

**Verse (14): "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."**

**"Death reigned"** = because they carried a nature susceptible to death. **"From Adam to Moses"** and these will be judged according to the law of nature (conscience) that God has placed in every human being. But even if one is found who did not sin, he also dies because of the nature he carries from Adam.

**"Death reigned"** = people were living in a kingdom called the kingdom of death and the law that prevailed in it is sin. Christ came to establish the kingdom of life and the law of righteousness prevails in it.

**"And that over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam"** = This means: -.

1. All humans who did not fall into the same sin as Adam.
2. Even on children who did not know sin, these died even though they did not transgress God's law like Adam.
3. It means that people started to sin due to their sinful nature, and because sin dwelt in them (Romans 7:20). As for Adam, sin did not dwell in him before he fell.

**"Who is a type of Him who was to come"**: meaning he is a type of Jesus Christ who was to come in the flesh:

1. Christ took a body like Adam.
2. Adam became the head of humanity and Christ became the head of the church.

3. Adam was a type of Christ as he spent a period of his life without sin, sin did not dwell in him before the fall, resembling Christ who is without sin. Note that Noah was more like Christ, as Noah became the head of the new creation (symbol of the church emerging from the baptismal waters). However, from the day of Noah's birth, sin dwelt in him, so the Apostle here took Adam as a symbol of Christ as Adam spent a period without sin.

4. Just as by one, who is Adam, judgment came upon all, so by one, who is Christ, righteousness came to all believers. And just as all fell with Adam even though they did not eat with him, so with Christ, all are justified without any merit of their own.

**Verse (15): "But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many."**

From here the Apostle begins to explain the gifts of Christ that He brought for the reconciliation that we boast of (verse 11).

The effects of Adam's sin were transferred to all humanity. And the effect of Christ's redemption was transferred to all believers. If sin were a small thing, the incarnation and redemption of Christ would not have been necessary. But let's see and understand the extent of the ugliness of sin. Adam's sin is one sin of one person, but look how much destruction, death, and ruin it brought to humans. And Christ did not come to offer redemption for Adam's sin alone, but also to contemplate the greatness and wonder of Christ's gift that far exceeded the effects of Adam's sin:

1. Humans were not returned to the state Adam was in, for example, if we returned to the same state as Adam, there would need to be a new redemption for every sin. But Christ's redemption became forgiveness for all the sins of people, and for all time, and for all places... for everyone who believes, is baptized, confesses his sin (1 John 1:9), and persists in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which has forgiveness of sins and eternal life for those who partake of it.
2. Adam was not a son because he was not united with Christ, as Christ had not yet incarnated, but after the incarnation of Christ, we became united with Him and thus became sons.
3. With sin, we lost Adam's life and started to die, and with grace, we received the life of Christ, our life has become the life of Christ within us (Galatians 2:20 + Philippians 1:21).
4. Adam lived on earth, and now we live in heaven (Ephesians 2:6).
5. One sin of Adam, and the judgment upon him because of it was death, but now repentance and confession erase any sin from our repeated sins. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7-10). Forgiveness has become continuous for every repentant.
6. By sin, we lost a mortal earthly body, and by the grace of Christ, we will have a glorified body with eternal life, which is the life of Christ, and we receive this through baptism.
7. By sin, we lost paradise, and this paradise is nothing but a garden on earth, and by the grace of Christ, we now have a place on Christ's throne (Revelation 21:3).
8. By sin, we lost a body prone to sin because it is exposed to the temptations of Satan, and by the grace of Christ, sin has become powerless over man, because we are under grace and not under the law (Romans 6:14). In fact, in heaven, demons will not enter heavenly Jerusalem, for nothing unclean will enter its gates (Revelation 21:27).

The subject is like a man who used to live on the tenth floor and with sin he descended to the street, and Christ came to elevate him to the one hundredth floor.

"**Many died**" = He means everyone died (except Elijah and Enoch). But he says many:

1. Because everyone might be few.
2. To highlight the ugliness of sin and its terrible effect.

**Verse (16): "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification."**

In simple words, the meaning of the verse is, "But the gift we received from Christ does not equate to the condemnation that befell us because of Adam. The condemnation that befell us is death. But what we received is glory, inheritance, eternal life, and sonship, etc." **For the judgment came from one resulting in condemnation** = the one is Adam, and the death is the condemnation. But the gift that came from many offenses resulted in justification = **As for the gift that Christ gave, it was for the forgiveness of many sins** (in fact, it is the sins of all humans everywhere and at all times) and that is for man to be justified and become righteous (not just forgiveness of sins but also the possibility of doing righteousness). Therefore, grace and sin are not similar because Christ and Satan are not equal. Death entered because of one sin, but the gift of Christ became for the forgiveness of all the sins of the world and even for justifying anyone who wants to be cleared from all over the world.

**Verse (17): "For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."**

Christ has offered much more good, much more than what was caused by the fall of Adam and sin.

What Christ offered, the Apostle here calls it the abundance of grace:

1. We received liberation from punishment.
2. We received liberation from evil.
3. The new birth.
4. The resurrected life.
5. We became brothers of the Son and partners in inheritance.
6. We united with Him.
7. We became righteous.
8. We received the life of Christ.
9. He planted grace in our lives.
10. God did not only grant innocence from sin but also justification (refer to the introduction about justification).
11. We became temples of the Holy Spirit and a dwelling for the Father and the Son.

**Verse (18): "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life."**

**Through one sin, which is the sin of Adam**, death came to all. Likewise, **through one act of righteousness**, which is Christ, life came to all believers. **"Resulting in justification of life"** = we receive a justified life in Christ, a life that does not follow sin, death and condemnation. **"One Man's righteous act"** = Christ's obedience to the cross.

**Verse (19): "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."**

**"For as by one man's disobedience"** = refers to Adam, who handed down to his descendants a nature that has fallen, a nature devoid of grace and susceptible to death. Physical death was a visible image of spiritual death. God allowed this death to prevail over man so that he might fear, be disciplined, and improve his condition. In the event of his discipline, he will be fit to be sanctified, thus protecting him from falling and eternal death. **"Many were made sinners"** he means everyone, but he says many, because sin is not a compulsory act. It is the freedom of will that makes a person a sinner, and it is also the freedom of will that will make a seeker of righteousness, righteous.

**"Man's Disobedience"** = The disobedience here refers to the transgression of God's commandment that He gave to Adam.

**"By one Man's obedience"** = God sent Christ to carry human nature, to elevate it above the fallen human nature. He planted grace in human nature instead of sin, so we became a new creation in Christ. He gave it the spirit of eternal life and holiness to overcome the power of death and trample on it. All this was due to the obedience of one, that is, Christ's obedience unto death, even death on the cross (Philippians 2:8). Let's note that the justified nature within us enables us to obey the commandment as He obeyed. So, grace not only removes sins, but also bestows righteousness. We inherited Adam's disobedience and carried this nature within us. Therefore, the Lord Christ came with His grace, offering us His obedience so that we could live it and carry Christ's obedience within us.

**Verse (20): "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more"**

**"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound"** (A more accurate translation is "the transgression"). The term **"entered"** implies that it is temporary and not original (Galatians 3:23). But what made the sin abound: -

1. The forbidden is desired and prohibition makes desire increase. This is due to the nature of disobedience that has become within us (this is the opposite of Christ's obedience).
2. Sin was unknown, but it became known and defined, in fact, it became a transgression against God's law and a breach of the commandments God has set.

The cause was not a flaw in the law but neglect by those who accepted it. God had to declare sin so that man could avoid it and not be destroyed. Note that the law was like a mirror; the mirror does not cause a flaw in a person's face, it reveals it. It reveals it but does not fix it, and this is the difference between law and grace.

**"But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more"** = This was with the coming of Christ

in a world dominated by sin and transgression. The meaning of the verse is that in places where sin abounds, God's work increases and grace abounds greatly to preserve His children in these places where, for example, their life circumstances or their work require them to be. And where the devil's work abounds, God does not leave him the field, but God's work increases greatly to support man with strength and for God to preserve His children. Note the structure of the verse.

**Where sin abounded..... grace abounded much more.**

If sin was **5** units..... Then grace would be **10** units.

If sin increased to **10** units... Then grace would increase to **100** units.

**Verse (21): "so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."**

It's almost the same meaning in (Verse 17).

Here we have two kingdoms. A kingdom dominated by sin and the end of the people of this kingdom is death. And a kingdom dominated by righteousness and its end is eternal life. In the first kingdom, sin reigns over people (Rom 6:12). And second, grace reigns over the people in it. And they live in righteousness (Rom 6:14). And notice how terrifying this sin is, it reigns like a king dominating (Rom 6:14) and it kills (Rom 7:11). So, it leads people to death. If sin was easy, it would not require the incarnation of Christ and his redemption. So, sin leads to death, and the law supports it, and condemns the sinner to death. But after Christ, and after Christ offered his grace, we no longer fear sin or dread death, but we are occupied with the glories prepared for us. The righteousness of God abolished death, so the sting of sin was broken, and it lost its authority in which it was fortified. And conversely, grace made the spirit inherit the kingdom of eternal life by the righteousness of God. And just as sin reigned and dominated the human race, and its authority and kingdom appeared in death - the state of death is the state of sin - so also grace reigns by the gift of righteousness so that eternal life reigns through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, grace leads to eternal life. And the state of righteousness (justification) is the state of eternal life.



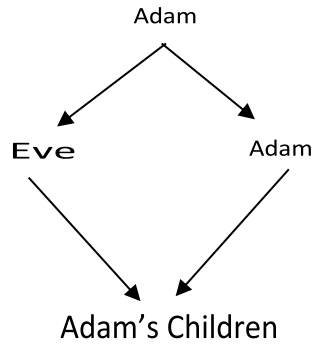
# Inheritance of original sin

## The Creation of Man and the Thought of God - The Unity of the Humans Race

God created man and, in his mind "the unity of the human race" God created Adam, and then brought Eve out of him. If Eve was in Adam. So, it was said that God "took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place". And the LORD God built the rib that he took from Adam the woman" (Genesis 2:21,22). And notice the saying that the Lord **He made into** a woman. So, Eve was not a new creation but was taken from Adam. The Lord God took the rib from Adam and formed from this rib the body of Eve. That is, God brought out of the rib that he had taken from Adam flesh and bones with which he built the body of Eve. Therefore, Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. This woman is called a woman, because she was taken from a woman" (Genesis 1:23) = This means that he built Eve from the rib. The children are sperm from Adam and an egg from Eve. This means that the children are from within Adam and Eve. If Eve is taken from Adam, then the children are from Adam, so we say to all creation that they are the sons of Adam. This is what is meant by the unity of the human's race, that is, all human beings are out of one human being, Adam. Adam became the head of men, Adam was first, then Eve came out of him, then the children, and the number kept increasing, and humans became Those who died and who are now, all come out of Adam. The whole human race was in Adam and came out of it by reproduction. This is what is meant by the unity of the human race. When Adam sinned, God punished him 1) by expulsion from Paradise. 2) And by death. God did not accept that this would be the end of Adam whom God created because He loved Him and said of Him "And my delight was with the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:31). **And it was redemption.**

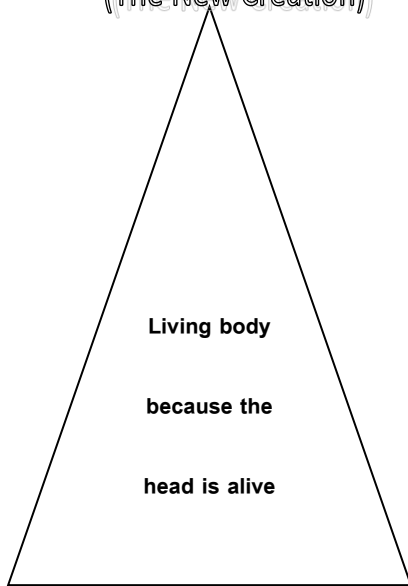
**Redemption:** Christ became flesh to be crucified, to die, to rise, to ascend and to be glorified, and He offered us redemption: He died on our behalf to die with Him in our old lives, He paid the penalty for our sins and rose to raise us united with Him, so our sins were forgiven and we obtained sonship to God by uniting us with His Son. Jesus restored God's purpose that man should live and not die but live forever and in glory. It also restored the "unity of the human race." It was that everyone who was baptized became a member of the one body of Christ united to Him. Therefore, we find in the following drawing two triangles: - The first triangle is the whole human race, the head of the triangle is Adam. And the base of the triangle is all the living that exist in the world today. And from within the triangle are those who died, that is, Adam and his sons. And the mother of all these human beings is the woman, Eve. But all this creation is dead: that is, 1) those who died from the days of Adam until now. 2) The base of the triangle is currently alive, and those are doomed to death. The second triangle: - They are all those who believed in Christ and were baptized and remained steadfast in Christ. They remain alive and have the eternal life of Christ. They will die, as the Apostle Paul says, "as it was appointed for men to die once" (Hebrews 9:27). But those who abide in Christ remain alive and their lives are

eternal life, the life of Christ united to Him, of which the Apostle Paul said, "To me life is Christ" (Philippians 1:21) + "Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20). Therefore, they will rise again at the Second Coming, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live' (John 11:25). Rather, they will go with Christ to eternal glory, "and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will also come and take you to me, so that where I am, you will also be" (John 14:3) + (John 17:22,24). The mother of those in this triangle is our Mother Mary.



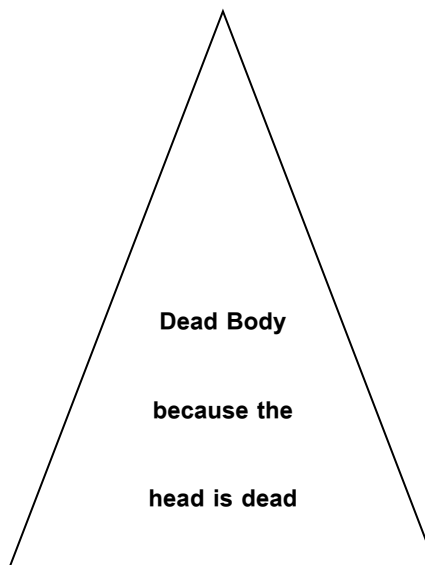
Then Creation Multiplied....

Christ The Head of the Church  
(The New Creation)



The Church

Adam the head of  
Creation



The Whole World

## **Inheritance of the Original Sin (Adam's Sin)**

**Some have said, "Why do we inherit Adam's sin and what is our sin?"** . We didn't eat from the tree! Some have said that God said, "The soul that sins die. The Son does not bear from the iniquity of the Father, and the Father does not bear from the iniquity of the Son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).

**In response, we say:-**

1. The whole creation was in Adam when the serpent deceived him and he fell. God punished him by expulsion from Paradise and by death. God had "created (man) Adam without corruption" (Basilian Mass). But when sin entered Adam, Adam's nature was corrupted, and death entered his nature. Because we were in Adam, we were subjected to the same judgment, namely expulsion, corruption, and death.
2. The Holy Fathers understood this and expressed it in their writings. We pray and repeat what they said in the masses: - St. Basil says, "Who made us, created us, and placed us in the paradise of bliss." Were we in the paradise of bliss with Adam?! No—but we were in Adam, and he was in the paradise of bliss, and we had not come out to life then, but we were in Adam. Saint Basil also says, "When we violated your commandment by the temptation of the serpent, we fell from eternal life, and were exiled from the paradise of bliss. " Did this really happen to us?! No - but we were in Adam when this happened. St. Gregory says in his Mass, "Heaven has set up a roof for me" did this happened to me only? No, God raised it up for all creation, but all creation is the sons of Adam, and on the day, Adam was created, we were in Adam.
3. That is why Saint Cyril the Great says, "Human nature became guilty of death, we became sinners by the disobedience of Adam. He also says, "We became partners in Adam's transgression" even though I did not sin. He also said that human nature contracted with the disease of sin, there became a contract between us and sin even the children. We did not eat from the tree, but we were in Adam. By virtue of our belonging to Adam by the nature we received from him, we were born in a sinful state. And as Adam returned to dust, we return to dust. We have become defeated and fallen in the person of Adam, because we were in Him when He sinned. Therefore, we were punished, and the wrath extended to all the descendants of Adam.
4. We notice that if we had been born of Adam before his fall, we would not have inherited sin.
5. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus says, "We are all those who were created again, deceived by the serpent when we were in Adam."
6. **Origin and branches:** - If a branch of a tree falls ill, that branch dies but the rest of the tree remains intact and alive. The disease of one branch will not be transmitted to other branches. If the disease has affected the root of the tree, the whole tree will die. From this analogy we understand that Adam was the root of the tree of mankind, and when he sinned, corrupted, and died, all this entered into the whole human race, that is, to all the sons of Adam. Therefore, we say that we inherited Adam's sin and did not say that we

inherited Eve's sin, with It was Eve who sinned first. Eve is one branch, and her sin will not affect the rest of the branches. Thus, I do not inherit my father's sin, nor my mother's sin, nor my grandfather's sin, for all these are branches. Adam, on the other hand, is the root from which all the branches came out. Therefore, his sin and its effects will encompass all branches, that is, all men.

7. The sin we inherit from Adam is the original sin, because of which death and corruption entered all creation. After this first fall, Adam must have sinned a lot, but we do not inherit his many sins. Here we apply God's words to Ezekiel "The Son shall not bear from the iniquity of the Father" (Ezekiel 18:20). We are not responsible for Adam's personal sins after the first downfall that brought sin, corruption, and death into the world. Therefore, the Bible mentioned to Adam only this first sin, which we call original sin, which was the cause of the distortion of creation and the entry of sin and the corruption of the human race and death to all the children of Adam, since all creation were in Adam when he sinned.
8. If we apply Ezekiel's saying, "The Son bears no iniquity of the Father" we would fall into a mistake called the danger of applying the one verse. Doctrine is not taken from a single verse, but from the thought of the Bible as a whole. But we apply this saying of Ezekiel to the rest of Adam's sins that he sinned, we have nothing to do with them and God does not punish us for the sins of Adam and Eve that they committed after the original sin. We were moved by His first sin only because it distorted and corrupted human nature, and we were born such sinners who distorted us by the corruption of sin.
9. If we were, according to what they say, do not inherit serious sin, they would have to answer this question... Why didn't God bring Cain, Abel, and Seth into heaven when they were born, since they had not yet sinned? But God kept them out of Paradise, and they remained under the rule of expulsion, corruption and death, because they were heirs to the sin of our father Adam.
10. If we do not inherit sin, we only inherit its consequences like death. So, there will be people who have not sinned and people who sin. Those who sin will be punished with death. If death has entered all men, is it not unjustly counted that those who have not sinned should die? But if all men had sinned, mass death for all men would be a just judgment, for all had sinned, and so death passed to all men, for all had sinned' (Romans 5:12).
11. Biblical evidence for the inheritance of serious sin: - **a)** "For this reason it is as if through one man sin entered into the world, and with sin death, and so death passed to all men, since all sinned" (Romans 5:12). Notice the saying of the Apostle Paul that it was through the sin of the one man (Adam) that sin entered the world and so death. **b)** David the prophet says "Behold, I have been conceived in iniquity, and by sin my mother has conceived me" and in the Septuagint "by sin my mother gave birth to me" (Psalm 51:5), even though marriage is holy and pure, "let marriage be honored to everyone, and the one who lies unclean" (Hebrews 13:4), and that it was God who established the sacrament of marriage, "so a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be attached to his wife, and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:24). That is, we were born like this bearing sin! And what sin is this that we carry from the wombs of our mothers when we have done

nothing? It is the original sin, the sin of Adam. **c)** In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says the same thing, "If I do what I do not want him to do, I will no longer do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:14-24). But the difference between New Testament Paul and Old Testament David is the presence of grace that sustains the believer by the work of the Holy Spirit, which the Apostle Paul called "for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has saved me from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). And this grace is greater than the power of sin, as the Apostle James says, "The Spirit who has come in us longs for envy? but he gives greater grace" (James 4:5:6). The Apostle Paul says, 'Sin will not prevail over you, for you are not under the law but under grace' (Romans 7:14). **d)** What made Cain kill his brother? Who taught Cain this evil? Is it not the sin that has entered the world? **e)** "And out of the womb I was called disobedient" (Isaiah 48:8), that is, there was a child born of a sinful nature. **f)** "And do not enter into the trial with your servant, for he will not be justified before you alive" (Psalm 143:2). And the Apostle Paul says, "All have been corrupted and corrupted together. There is no one who does good" (Romans 3:12). **g)** For God closed in on all together in disobedience, that he might have mercy on all' (Romans 11:32). **h)** 'We were by nature children of wrath as the rest" (Ephesians 2:3). **i)** The Lord says, "For the conception of man's heart has been evil since his youth" (Genesis 8:21). **j)** The idea that we inherited sin because we were in Adam's body when Adam sinned, was used by the Apostle Paul to prove the greatness of Melchizedek priesthood in relation to the Levite Aaronian priesthood, saying that Melchizedek blessed Aaron and took the tithes, and Aaron was in Abraham's body at that time. It is as if Melchizedek had blessed Aaron because he was in Abraham's body when Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Hebrews 7: 1-10). Thus, Melchizedek and his priesthood become greater than Aaron and his priesthood. This is how we were in the body of Adam and Eve when they sinned and were condemned to death. The death sentence was on Adam with all his sperm and all the eggs in Eve. Whoever is born from a sperm from Adam and from an egg from Eve is doomed. The Apostle Paul says, "He who was delivered up for our sins and raised up for our justification" (Romans 4:25) Christ justified us with His blood. The justification is to erase sins. Sin has a punishment, and punishment requires redemption and bloodshed. But if we had not inherited sin and inherited its consequences only from corruption, there would be no need for the cross, sanctification would have sufficed, and sanctification required repentance, teaching and awareness. But we inherited sin and this requires blood, redemption and atonement.

12. Some have said sarcastically, if sin is inherited by marriage and procreation, let us forbid marriage because it has become a tool for the transmission and inheritance of sin. The answer, of course, is no: - **a)** Do we forbid fire because it burns. **b)** Marriage is honored and established by God (cf. point 11). **c)** God has established baptism to forgive the sin of the child born. **d)** Do we stop marriage and stop the growth of humanity and the continuation of human survival?
13. Some have said that redemption was for the renewal of humanity, but it was also for saving us from eternal destruction: "This is how the Son of Man should be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14:15). Without redemption we would perish because we are sinners and punished, "even when

we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). Some have said that Christ died out of love for us, with the Apostle Paul saying, “But God showed his love for us, for while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). He died to show His love. But does it make sense that Jesus to show His love he had to be crucified and die!! **Strange words.** But they want to abolish the idea of punishment!! But Christ died out of His love to take away anger from us and atone for our sins, so that we may not perish forever. And why was there anger? Because there is disobedience and sin, and this makes us enemies of God. Notice the apostle's saying, “We are much more justified, now by his blood we will be saved from wrath” (Romans 5:9). “Christ has placed on him the iniquity of all of us” (Isaiah 53:6). He bore our sins with His blood, and Christ was the atonement for our sins: "And if anyone sins, we have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. It is the atonement for our sins. “Not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1,1). Christ is the Lamb, the bearer of the sins of the world. We note that the cross cannot be separated from the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins cannot be separated from the punishment because the forgiveness of sins requires the shedding of blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness “and almost everything is cleansed according to the law by blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22). He noted that Christ made the Eucharistic offering to be given for the forgiveness of sin 'for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Matthew 26:28). So there are sins that resulted in anger and punishment, but out of God's love there was forgiveness for the repentant believer, God's love is a forgiving love, as the apostle said, “In whom we have redemption by his blood, forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

14. **Christ the Savior:** The angel said to the Virgin Mary, 'Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus' (Luke 1:31). Jesus' name means Jehovah saved, for Christ came to save, “for the Son of man has come to seek and save what is lost” (Luke 19 :10). Christ on the cross was the Savior of the world. The Apostle Paul says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, the first of whom is I" (1 Timothy 1:15). And the Lord of glory says, "For I have not come to judge the world but to save the world" (John 12:47). Paul says, “For by grace you are saved” (Ephesians 2:8). And salvation was through the cross. And the Lord of Glory says, "No! I tell you, if you do not repent, all of you will also perish” (Luke 13:3). Sin = death. The father said of his prodigal son when he repented and returned to him in repentance, “for this my son was dead and is alive again” (Luke 15:24). Conversely, the Lord says of the sinful angel of the church of Sardis, “You have a name, that you are alive, and you are dead” (Revelation 3:1). It is clear here that destruction is a punishment for sin for which no repentance has been made. There is even a terrifying saying of the Apostle Paul, "For we know him who said: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:30:31).
15. Jesus also made peace with His cross between the Father and His people, “that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting for their sins” (2

Corinthians 5:19). then before reconciliation, there was hostility. The hostility was caused by disobedience and sin. And how did the reconciliation happen? Christ paid the price with His blood on the cross. 'For He has made him who knew no sin, to be sin for our sake, that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Rather, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13) cf. the article The Cross is a curse that turns into a blessing at the end of the third chapter of Galatians. Christ on the cross became a curse and became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) + (Romans 3:24) for us to take away sin and curse. Therefore, we say that the love of our Lord is a practical love in which He paid for our sins and blotted them out with His blood.

16. **Children's baptism:** The Apostle Paul says, "They have all turned aside: They have together become unprofitable: There is none who does good" (Romans 3:12) The Apostle Paul did not spare the newly born children who did not sin but were heirs to Adam's sin. That is why the Church baptizes children. And why is the Church baptizing children even though they have not yet sinned? This is due to the word according to the Apostle Paul, "nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam" (Romans 5:14). The apostle also said, "Therefore as through one man's offense judgment came to all men" (Romans 5:18). From all this, we understand that children "who have not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, but all human beings have been doomed. Death is a punishment for sin. If the children have not yet sinned, what sin are they punished with death except the sin inherited from Adam.
17. Note that there are two types of sins attributed to man: - **a)** The original sin that we inherited from our father Adam. **b)** My own sins, which I do because of my fallen nature. Both types were carried by Christ, and we have seen in the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament two of sacrifices to bear sin that express the two types of sin: **a)** The sacrifice of sin: These speak of the forgiveness of original sin. **b)** The Sacrifice of Trespass offering: This speaks of the forgiveness of personal sins. Christ came to wipe away all sins: The sins of all, that is, the sin that all inherited from Adam, and the sins of each one separately.
18. We notice that there is an apparent contradiction between two verses: "The Son bears no iniquity of the Father" (Ezekiel 18:20). 'For this reason, it is as if through one man sin entered into the world, and with sin death" (Romans 5:12). But in fact, there is no dispute, for the Apostle Paul speaks of the sin that caused the corruption of our nature, this corrupt nature that we inherited from Adam. We inherited from Adam the sin of fallen nature, but we did not inherit his personal sins that occurred after the first fall that corrupted his nature. We inherited original sin, corruption, and death. This is all called sins according to nature. But there are my own sins, and these I do not pass on to my children, and I have not inherited the sins of my father or mother. This is what Ezekiel is talking about. Were it not for the fact that there are two kinds of sins: Original sin and this is inherited, and our own sins and these are not inherited, there would be a contradiction in the Bible: Ezekiel says that the Son does not inherit his Father's sin and Paul says, "It is as if through one man sin entered into the world".

19. And what does the corruption of nature mean? What does it mean for Adam and Eve to feel naked? They were naked, so what happened? They have a new nature entered by lust that did not exist before. This sin is what we say about it, there has become a sinful fallen nature that we inherit from Adam. These are separated from our own sins. This explains the saying of the Bible: "And God said: 'Let the earth grow grass, and a seed, and a tree of fruit that bears fruit as its own kind' (Genesis 1:11). So, the seed bears the same nature as the original bean. We bore the same sinful nature as Adam.
20. The only one who was born without inheriting sin is the man Jesus Christ. If Christ had been born through natural procreation, He would have inherited the original sin, and thus he would not have been able to offer redemption for anyone. Therefore, in order not to inherit the original sin, He had to be born in a human body to resemble us in everything, but without the natural way of procreation, and He was born miraculously. Whoever denies the doctrine of the inheritance of sin must answer the question – Why was Christ not born through natural procreation? The Holy Spirit dwelt in the virgin's womb and cleansed her storehouse, and Christ did not bear the original sin. Therefore the angel said to the Virgin Mary, "And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy, Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God". (Luke 1:35). Here the angel says of Christ that he is holy, which means that he is without sin. The word Holy can only be spoken of God. We note that if Christ had sin, He would die for Himself and not for anyone. The Baptist said of Jesus, "And on the morrow John looked at Jesus and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). In the book of Isaiah, it is said, "We are all like sheep who have gone astray. We have led everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of all of us' (Isaiah 53:6).

### **But what did Christ do with His incarnation and redemption?**

The Son of God became incarnate to die, to rise, and to ascend His body into heaven to glorify His body, which is of our human race (John 17:1–5). This was so that we might die and be buried with Him by our old man, the bearer of Adam's sin, and the maker of a great number of personal sins, to be buried with Him in baptism, and our original sin that what we had committed would be forgiven. And we rise with Him a new life, which is His eternal life, which He rose from the dead. We rise united to Christ, the Son of God, and become children of God in Christ (Romans 6). And He comes in His second coming to take us with Him to His glory (John 14:3 + John 17:22-24). And what happens at baptism 'knowing this: that our old man was crucified with him to abolish the body of sin, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin' (Romans 6:6).

1. Jesus offered His redemption to the two the righteous ones who died in the Old Testament, and to those who believed, were baptized and abided in Him in the New Testament (see Commentary on Romans 3:25,26). The believers in the New Testament died with Him and their sins were forgiven in baptism. This is what the Church does in the sacrament of Eucharist from which we offer the Lamb in the



Eucharist, we make the sacrament out of fermented dough. The dough symbolizes the righteous Christ made of white flour as a sign of his righteousness, and the flour is crushed as a symbol of his sorrows and sufferings, as the prophet Isaiah says, "crushed for our sins" + "But the Lord was pleased to crush him with sorrow" (Isaiah 53:5,10), with leaven added to it, and leaven symbolizes evil: "First of all, guard yourselves from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1). But this sourdough goes into the oven and the yeast dies. This represents Christ who bears the sins of the evil world and died by them and died them. That is why we call the sacrament we offer in the Eucharist the Lamb. For Christ is the Lamb who bears the sins of the world. Christ saved the righteous ones of the Old Testament who were waiting in the den and saved those who believed from the New Testament. He went down to the den (Isaiah 51:14 + Ezekiel 31:14,16 + Zech. 9:11) in which these righteous ones were waiting to take them to Paradise, as if He had died and been buried with them, forgiving their sins. Thus, the Apostle Paul says that Christ descended to the souls of the righteous in the den, or what we call hell, or what the Jews called "the lower parts of the earth" Therefore he says: When he ascended to the High, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men". Now this, He ascended – what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Ephesians 4:8,9). And this was God's promise in the prophecy of Zechariah the prophet, "And you also, by the blood of your covenant have released your captives from the pit, which has no water. Return to the fortress, you prisoners of hope" (Zech. 9:11,12).

2. The Apostle Paul says, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus; if one died for all, then all died" (2 Corinthians 5:14). So, Christ died on the cross and paid our debt of eternal perdition. Christ had his divinity united with his humanity, and the divinity infinite, so the death of Christ had infinite possibilities. The death of Christ became equal to the death of all.
3. By Adam's sin we inherited sin, but by the redemption of Christ many will be made righteous, as the Apostle Paul says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be righteous" (Romans 5:19). Notice the apostle's saying, "Many have been made sinners," which is clear evidence of the inheritance of sin. But as we received from Adam sin, we received righteousness from Christ.
4. Notice that we inherited sin, without sinning by eating from the tree. Also, we are justified without doing anything, for Christ is the One who did everything, and trampled the press alone, "What is wrong with your clothes reddish, and your clothes like the trampling of the press? I have trampled the press alone, and of the peoples there was no one with me" (Isaiah 63:2,3). Therefore, whoever objects that he inherited Adam's sin without guilt, must know that Christ justified him without laboring in anything, Christ alone did everything without the intervention of man, and this is the meaning of "I have trampled the press alone". The press is where they squeeze the grapes by young men dressed in white and trampling the grapes with their feet, but they come out of the press with their clothes covered in a red color, the color

- of the grapes. And Christ was on the cross with blood covering every point of his body, and this is the Atonement, that is, he covered his body with his blood, and his body is his church. He did all the work alone to save His Church.
5. Let us put before our eyes on God's eternal love for us before we discuss these philosophical theories such as whether we inherit sin when we have not sinned. Notice the words of the Apostle Paul, "As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and blameless before Him in love, for He had already appointed us to be adopted by Jesus Christ for Himself, according to the pleasure of His will. (Ephesians 1:4,5). Is there anything to be said about the inheritance of sin or other philosophies that are neither sung nor increased in front of this love. Let us stand before the words of the Apostle Paul, "But death reigned from Adam to Moses, and that is against those who have not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is the example of the one to come" (Romans 5:14). This means that God created Adam in the image in which Christ would become incarnate. From His eternal love, God knew that Adam would fall and so God prepared the way of saving man through the incarnation of his Son (Isaiah 48:16). God knew that Adam would fall as a result of the freedom given to him by God the Creator. God preferred to create Adam free and not a slave, and for Adam to sin with his freedom and God declares that He is willing to pay the price of Adam's freedom, by incarnating his Son and dying to save the free Adam. God wants us to freely choose Him as Father and Lord for us out of conviction and love for Him, not out of fear of punishment.
  6. Jesus is said to "being found in the form as a man, he humbled himself, and obeyed unto death, the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8). Why did the apostle say that Jesus obeyed, but even more so that Christ "though he was a son, learned obedience from what he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). This is understood from Jesus' prayer in 'Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me, but not as I will, but as you will' (Matthew 26:39). Christ in his humanity was a perfect man, he knew the sufferings he would endure, and as a perfect man he wished not to go through these sufferings but obeyed to death the death of the cross. Christ, by His divinity, was in agreement with the Father and the Son that He would do this work (Isaiah 48:16). Christ obeyed the will of the Divinity with His humanity. This was the opposite of what Adam did, who disobeyed God and died and death entered the whole world, that is, for all the children of Adam. But Christ obeyed, and by His obeying righteousness entered into those who believe throughout the world. We took the inheritance of sin from the first Adam, but instead we took the inheritance of righteousness through redemption from Christ.
  7. God wanted to exchange love with Adam and his descendants and was even told "And my delight was with the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:31). The sign of God's love for Adam was this beautiful paradise that God created and prepared for Adam to rejoice in. God wished that Adam would walk in obedience to him as a declaration of his love and trust in God. This did not happen, but Adam disobeyed and died. The last Christ Adam came to make amends for what Adam had done and obeyed unto death the death of the cross. May He gather together all the believers who have decided to believe in Him and abide in Him, to restore them in the unity of His one Body and to

- submit them to the Father obediently, as God intended from the beginning (1 Corinthians 15:28). Adam's sin was disobedience and reform was obedience, obedience to Christ. Christ erased by His obeying the original sin, which is Adam's disobedience, and by it he was the disobedience of all, and he blotted out the actual sins, that is, the sins of each one separately.
8. Paul's statement of Adam "who is the example to come" (Romans 5:12) indicates that just as we are counted as sinners in Adam, we will be counted righteous in Christ. We sinned in Adam and are justified in Christ. Adam brought death, sin, and corruption. Christ brought us righteousness, life, and incorruptibility. Just as we were created in Adam, we are created as new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). So, we take from Adam: Creation, death, sin, corruption, and taking from Christ, the new creation, righteousness, life, and incorruptibility. But who benefits from the work of Christ and His cross? "But to all who received him, he gave them the power to become children of God, that is, those who believe in his name. who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13). Adam was the root of the tree of men, and when the root was corrupted and died, all the branches were corrupted and died. The last Christ Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45) came to become the root of a new tree without disease, corruption or death, a new asset of a new tree that lives forever, and the head of this new creation.
  9. Christ came as the head of the new creation and is united to his divinity, so in him is eternal life, he died with his human body but his divinity risen his body, but raised up all those who believed in him and abided in him, giving them his eternal life, holiness, glory and grace, and dwelt in the believers who abide in him, his Holy Spirit leads, comforts, and abides them in him.
  10. There is a beautiful example from the Old Testament: David's struggle as a representative of the Jews, the people of God, against Goliath as a representative of the Philistines. And when David prevailed according to God's people, they were all overcomers, David's victory became for all the people, even though the people did not fight. And when Goliath was defeated, all the Philistines were defeated and withdrew. This is what happened when Christ defeated Satan with His cross, and everyone who believes in Christ and abides in Him is often counted as a winner. Christ overcame Satan on our behalf, overcame him and became broken and we defeat him with the sign of the cross.
  11. Christ came to gather us, and Christ gathers us in His body by faith, baptism, and communion. And everyone who joins his body. He will also bring new sheep, the Gentiles (John 10:16). He still houses new sheep in the sheepfold (church). And all who join are said to have become "one body, one spirit, as you have also been called in the hope of your one calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father for all, who is over all and in all and in all of you" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Saint Irenaeus says, "Just as the first Adam contained in himself all his descendants, Christ also restored in himself all peoples, even the first Adam. When he became flesh, he restored in himself the sequence of the human race. Thus, just as the first Adam created a disobedient race. Thus, the Messiah, Adam the last began a new humanity

and redeemed it with His blood. This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, “The plan for the fullness of times, that all things may be gathered together in Christ, whether in heaven and on earth, in that time” (Ephesians 1:10).

12. We say more than this with the apostle Paul, “But not as sin, so also is the flame” (Romans 5:15) and see interpretation of the verse in its place. We have lost much through sin, but what Christ has given us has been many times greater than what we have lost. For example, we lost paradise, which is just a garden or a beautiful paradise, but what did Christ return to us? a place in his throne (Revelation 3:21). We have lost a body of the clay of the earth, and what will Christ bring back to us? He was fleshed in the image of his glorified body (Philippians 3:21 + 1 John 3:2).

**What are we talking about! Have we inherited sin or the effects of sin?!!**

**The answer is that we have inherited a forgiving and glorious love.**

**Let us enjoy what we have obtained and thank God and praise Him.**

# Chapter Six

## **Introduction:**

In this chapter, we see the work of baptism, which is burial with Christ and death then resurrection with Him, crucifixion for the old man to rise the new man. Here we need to set definitions that help us understand: -

**The Old Man:** - The Prophet David says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." (Psalms 51:5). And in (Romans 7:20) we hear the Apostle saying, the sin that dwells in me, and in (Romans 6:6) we hear the expression of the old man, as well as in (Colossians 3:9 + Ephesians 4:22). And in (Romans 6:6) we hear the expression body of sin. From all this, we understand that we were born with a wicked sinful nature, and this is before faith and baptism. This sinful nature has evil motives and leads man to do evil, and it uses the members of the human body as instruments of sin, that is, to carry out evil. This old man dies in baptism and a new man is born instead.

**The New Man:** - (Colossians 3:10) and we hear in (2 Corinthians 4:16) about the inner man "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.". And the new inner man is led by the Holy Spirit.

**The Outward Man:** - It is the members of the body (the hand, the leg, the eye... etc.). God allows the body (the outward man) to suffer so that the inner one may be renewed (2 Corinthians 4:16). The Apostle's comparison of sin to a man or a body means that it represents a living being that behaves to make us fall. We note the repetition of the word '**slave**' in verses (15-23) eight times. This refers to the dominion of sin that rules over man and enslaves him. It enslaves the members of the outward man to obey it and commit sin, making the members instruments of sin. Through baptism, this old man dies, and a new man is born, led by the Holy Spirit. He is also able to enslave the members of the body and lead them to do righteousness, thereby making the members of the outward man instruments of righteousness. Therefore, the inner man, whether old or new, can lead the members of the body. Baptism gives death to the old man, but it is like a clinical death in which the heart stops, but the brain still works, and with electric shocks, the heart returns to work. Likewise, the old man, if affected by lusts, words, obscene images... etc, returns to be active. Also, the new man, if given his food, becomes active. After baptism, I am free to activate either of the two inner men. The old man is activated by practicing evil, arousing lusts ... etc. The new man is activated by prayer, praise, studying the Bible, service... etc. This is the food for each of them. The stronger of the two inner men, he leads the outer man.

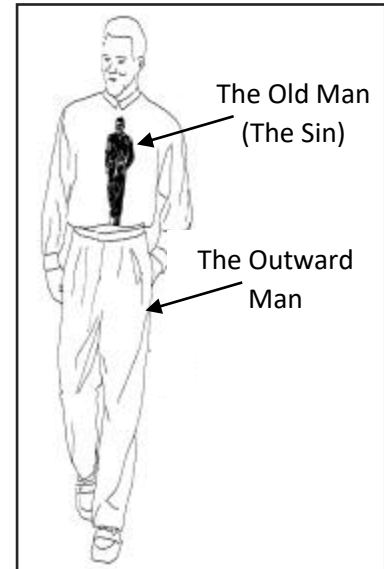
**Story:** - A father and mother from America wanted to go on a vacation for a week, so they called their babysitter to come for their baby. She promised them to come, so they traveled and left their baby. The babysitter forgot about the matter, and after a week the father and mother returned to find their son, and behold, he was a lifeless corpse. Why? Because they forgot to feed him.

In baptism, a new inner man is born for us. Do we feed and nourish him or leave him to die? Which of the two inner men do we nourish? The matter is in our hands. Baptism does not abolish our freedom. But through baptism, Christ liberates us from the sinful nature, so it is not

permissible to return to its slavery again, for its slavery leads to death. Note that we are either in growth, and the new man grows and the old man withers, or the opposite, we decline, and the old man grows and the new man withers.

### **The Old Man:**

We are born this way with a nature open to evil, sin, and lust. A deviant nature. In it, the old man uses the members of the outer body as instruments of sin. The leader here is sin.



### **In Baptism:**

The old man, died and the new man was born, his life is the life of Christ risen from the dead. This new man is open to God, his senses are open to heaven. And nothing satisfies him but God. He uses the members of the outer body as instruments of righteousness to serve the God whom he loves, the leader here is the Holy Spirit. This is done by baptism for infants or by faith first and baptism second for adults. In baptism, the corrupt nature dies. Such a man finds a mighty authority in grace, capable of preserving him from sin and leading him to do righteousness with pleasure.

And we obtain the nature of the new man as follows:

1. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (faith + baptism).
2. Put to death your members... (Passive struggle).
3. Nourishing this new man (Positive struggle).

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Colossians 3:1).

And in baptism, the old man will not die a complete and final death, because God

Does not want to deprive man of the freedom of choice.

We are created in the image of God, free.

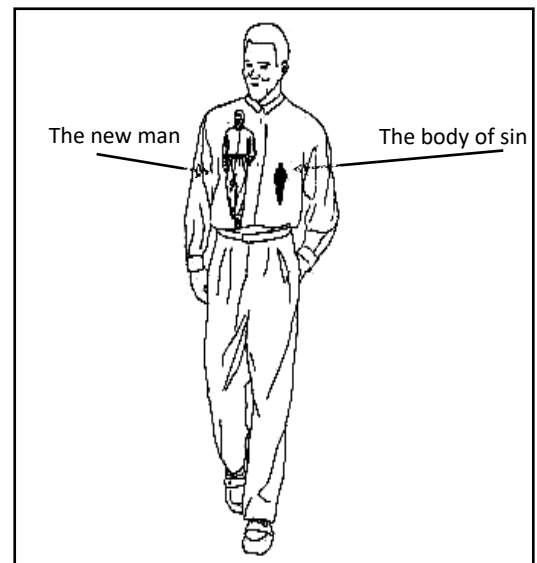
As we said, the death of the old man in baptism is a death similar to clinical death.

And we are able to revive him. But God, in His grace, gives us strength to support us if we want.

God supports those who want, but does not establish us in it without our will. He supports those who want to live a life of mortification.

That's why the Lord Jesus said to the angel of the church in Laodicea, "I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3).

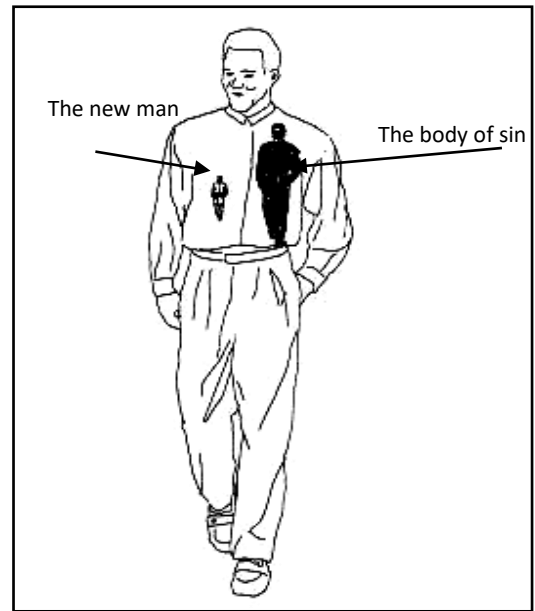
And the Lord asks us saying, "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4).



### **The apostate from faith (one who arouses the old man).**

This is the one who stirs up his desires and makes the body of sin awaken. And neglects his struggle (negative and positive). He feeds the body of sin with his sins and deprives the new man of his food (neglect of prayer, the Holy Bible, and means of grace...). Here, the body of sin

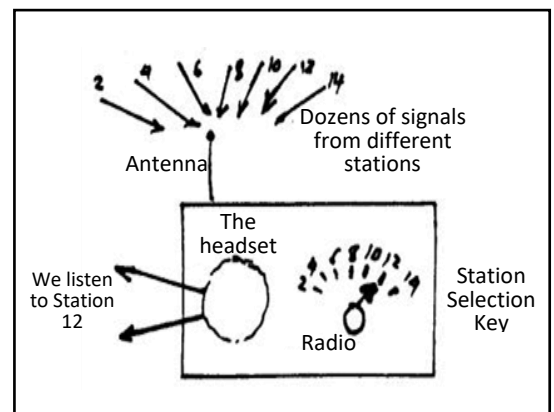
returns to lead the members of man and makes them instruments of sin. Such a man is only satisfied by the world and no longer sees God, so he does not seek God to satisfy him as he only understands the desires of the world. This man finds a mighty authority in sin. The Apostle Paul says that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Galatians 5:17). And by "**flesh**" here, the Apostle means the wrong desire, or the sin that dwells within me. And by "**spirit**" he means the Holy Spirit who leads the new man. However, the Apostle Paul does not attack the external body with its members, but he attacks the old man who is open to evil and enslaves the external human members, so they delight in evil. And when the old man is the leader, this man is sensual. But if the new man is the leader, this man is spiritual. The Apostle does not attack the body with its external members, for the body is not impure, otherwise Christ would not have taken a body like ours. But even Elisha's bones raised the dead. And even now, the bones of the saints perform miracles.



### The Work of Grace and the Work of Sin.

There is a natural phenomenon that explains what happens, called the resonance phenomenon. There are thousands of radio waves passing through the air around us, but if there is a match between the radio circuits and the circuits of any transmitting station, this station's signals are amplified, and we find the radio broadcasting them.

There are dozens of stations that emit their signals and are received by the aerial. According to the station selection switch, we tune the radio circuits with one of the stations. When there is a match, the signals of station number 12 are amplified with the selection for station number 12, and the radio broadcasts the sound of station number 12. In the same previous idea, when my will matches the will of God, grace is amplified within me. And when my will matches the will of Satan, the wrong desires ignite within me, and the matter is in my hands. The choice is in my hands. So when my deeds and my struggle are for the glory of God, grace pours into me, grace for grace (John 1:16), and vice versa.



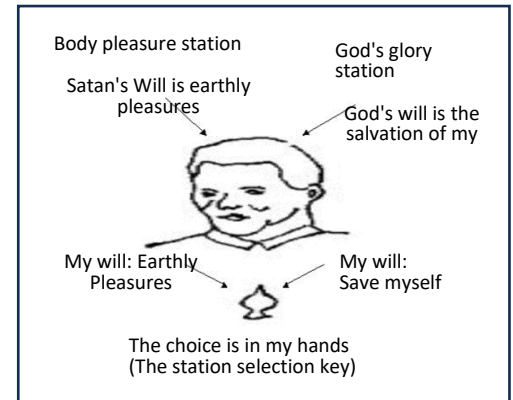
And this is an advantage for us over Adam, that there are two humans within us and we are free to choose which one leads the members of our body.

\* And if there is a match between my will and sin, I find that sin has a mighty, overwhelming power. Here, the old man leads the external body members to do evil, so these body members in this case become instruments of sin.

\* And if there is a match between my will and the will of God, I find that grace has a mighty power that makes me unable to do evil. Here, the new man leads the body members to do good with pleasure, and the body members in this case become instruments of righteousness.

\*That is why the Lord Jesus asked the paralytic, "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6). And the Lord says, "How often I wanted to...but you were not willing" (Matthew 23:37). This is because every person is free in his choice.

\*And whoever feeds the new man with prayer and the Holy Bible for he "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4), then in this, the will of man agrees with the will of God "who desires all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). And when this agreement occurs, grace has a mighty preserving power that prevents falling.



**Verses (1-2): "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"**

Paul had previously said that where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. Perhaps this statement provoked some people, so they wondered, "**Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?**" and the answer is "**Certainly not!**" = it means we should not utter these words that do not please God. This is a question from those who do not know the price that was paid for grace to abound, which is the blood of Christ. It is a question that indicates a lack of understanding of what happened on the cross. Christ didn't die for His sin as He is righteous without sin, but He died in the flesh of humanity, and I am one of these humans, so He died for me. So, His death became for me to die with Him in my old life, and that is through baptism = "**We who died**", and the one who died is the old man. Whoever is baptized dies with Christ, so his sin dies. So, baptism killed the sin in us and gave us to be a new creation. And for sin to remain dead, we must continue to fight by standing before sin as dead. Christ died in the flesh of our humanity, and I participate with Christ in His death through baptism. And the power of this death is working in us.

1. By faith.

2. By baptism.

3. By our will and choice. And it starts by forcing us to consider ourselves dead to sin (Romans 6:11), this is what is called mortification. And by this, the life of Jesus appears in us (2 Corinthians 4:10,11).

And by the power of this death, sin dies in our members by the power of the Spirit within us (Colossians 3:5 + Romans 8:13). This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). And in (Galatians 5:24) we clearly see the voluntary action of man "Who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."... These people bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23) and from the fruit of the Spirit.. grace. Therefore, the Apostle Paul says, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection". But whoever returns by his will and lives in sin, the body of sin rises again within him forcefully. Every person is free to choose. If he chooses to die with Christ and considers himself crucified from the world of sin, he will find a power working within him, which is the power of Christ's



death, and he will find that sin is weakening in his members. And if he chooses to live for sin, he will not experience this power, but will feel that sin dominates him powerfully and subjugates him.

So, grace is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit fills those who have crucified their flesh. There is a legal ladder that Christ followed, and we should also follow it. The Holy Spirit descended on the Church after the Ascension. The Ascension came after the Resurrection, and the Resurrection came after death... and death came after the crucifixion.

And this is what is required of us... In order to taste heavenly life (Ascension), we should rise with Christ, meaning Christ lives in me, meaning I live by the life of Christ who is risen from the dead (Resurrection). And for this to happen, I must stand as dead before sin (Death), and this is by judging my body to be crucified from its desires and lusts. This is the meaning of "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). And the Lord Jesus says, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost?" and the tower is to live a heavenly life. And the cost is a dead, crucified body. And we note that Christ lived on earth experiencing the life of death, and whoever wants to be his disciple must carry his cross and follow him in practicing voluntary death. Christ accepted baptism as a symbol of his death before he died on the cross, and this was a sign of his acceptance of death by his will. This is the meaning of Aaron's dead rod blossoming. And this is the meaning of "Whoever loves his life will lose it". And the woman who poured the perfume (Mark 14:3-9). Christ said about her that this act of hers will be a preaching, for preaching is when a person pours himself out to death for the sake of Christ. The world sees this as destruction, but God deserves that I leave everything for His sake.

And we note that the Apostle spoke before about our sonship to Abraham, and here he elevates us to a higher level, which is sonship to God in baptism, to live all as sons of God (Gentiles and Jews) in the newness of life, meaning the new life risen with Christ. So, in baptism, we die with Christ (from sin) then we rise by the life of Christ (Christ lives in me) He gives me His righteousness, so I live to make righteousness. And our bodies become instruments of righteousness. And the power of Christ's resurrection works in me to make righteousness. This is the concept of freedom, meaning the practice of the holy life by divine grace, by the spirit of sonship to God.

But is there a person without sin? We say no. For all of us have our sins (1 John 1: 8 - 10) but the children of God fall out of weakness and rise quickly, offering repentance. They rise quickly as those who are strangers to this act and cannot bear to live in sin.

**Verses (3-4): "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."**

**"Baptized into Christ Jesus" = "We were baptized into His death"** = By baptism, we became participants in the cross of His death. (This is like a fetus in its mother's womb, if the mother dies, the fetus dies with her). So, by baptism, I become in Christ. And the womb of the mother here is baptism in which we die with Christ or die in Christ.

Our old man has been crucified and died just as Christ was crucified on the cross and died. Christ died and was buried in the body, but we die in relation to sin. Our essence does not die, but the

man of sin, that is, evil, is the one who dies. So, I died with Christ and in Him by the body of sin, and then I rose with Him. Christ's death cannot be attributed without resurrection because He is the resurrection. "**By the glory of the Father**" = means that by the resurrection, the glory of the Father appeared and all of God's promises were fulfilled, and we now see them by faith. Christ, who used to declare the Father "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18), now, by His resurrection, He announced that life has returned to humans after they had died and God's purpose in creating man was fulfilled. This is the will of the Father, that we live eternally to glorify Him and declare His glory and light when we reflect this glory and light, and the love of the Father and His will for us to live after death made us glorify Him.

"**Newness of life**" = means a new life. We rise with Christ in a new, virtuous life, and a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and we direct our behavior in accordance with this new life. It's a life with new possibilities, it's the life of Christ risen from the dead. This newness of life contrasts with the state of death that we lived as sinners. And newness of life means a life that is renewed and does not age. It's a life with new laws, new goals, new principles, and new friends. And note his saying "**Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism**" = So burial in baptism refers to the importance of the doctrine of immersion in baptism.

But let's note that baptism does not deprive me of the freedom that God has instilled in me. God created me in His image free and will not deprive me again of the grace He gave me before. Therefore, I died in Christ in baptism, and I rose united with Him. And by being united with Him, I have the life of Christ "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21) Therefore, I have gained eternal life in baptism, for Christ will not die again, and His life that I have gained is eternal. However, I must strive to remain dead to sin so that the life of Christ remains in me. And we can say "Everyone who strives to remain dead to the life of Adam will remain alive forever with the life of Christ". This is the meaning of "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Baptism is a sacrament completed by the priest, but I must strive to remain steadfast in Christ. Therefore, Christ says "Abide in me, and I in you". Baptism is not a ritual that ends, but it must be followed by a decision to continue being dead to sin (Romans 6:11) so we remain steadfast in Christ, and thus the Holy Spirit who was poured out on Christ on the day of His baptism fills us, and He gives the grace that renews our nature and makes us a new creation. The sacrament of Chrismation is called the sacrament of confirmation because the Holy Spirit is the one who convict us if we sin and He is the one who helps our weaknesses to return us to steadfastness in Christ if we sin, and sin definitely separates us from Christ. And if the Spirit returns us to steadfastness in Christ, life returns to us, so we call the Holy Spirit the life-giving Spirit.

**Why did the Holy Spirit descend on Christ on the day of baptism?**

**Why did Christ choose to announce His death and resurrection through His baptism?**

Christ was baptized to announce that He accepted death and resurrection for our sake. We die in Him with our old fallen nature, and we rise with a new life, which is His life risen from the dead. And the Holy Spirit descended on Christ on the day of baptism so that each of us, when we go down into the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit shares with us in the death of Christ, and our old man dies. And when we ascend from the waters of baptism, Christ shares with us in the resurrection of Christ and we have the eternal life of Christ.

**Verse (5): "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we**

**also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection"**

**"United together with Him"** = Baptism is the opportunity for true union with Christ **"In the likeness of His death"** = For Christ died in the flesh, but we die to sin. What dies in us is the old man. Therefore, the path of our life is difficult because it is a path of death. But it is also joyful, for it is also a path of resurrection. Sin dies, righteousness lives and rises, and we live in heavenly life (Ephesians 2:6). The old man ends and the new heavenly man lives. We rise in this new life to live by the life of Christ, who has risen from the dead. For we are united with Him in His death and in His resurrection, so the life that is in me is His life risen from the dead. And whoever hears His voice now and repents rises from the death of sin. And this is the first resurrection, and whoever lives it will have the second resurrection, that is, he will rise from the dead to eternal life in the glory of God in the second coming (John 5:24-29). Therefore, if we have been united with Him through baptism, which is like His death, then as a natural result of that, we will also become one with Him, with Christ, united with Him in His resurrection, on the basis that we remain dead to sins, so we remain steadfast in Him. And we notice that there are two types of death:

[1] Death [2] Mortification.

**Death:** - It is the work of Christ within us by burying our past sins. This death is a gift from Him.

**Mortification:** - In order for us to remain dead to sin after baptism, we need to strive even to blood (Hebrews 12:4). And the struggle should be our focus until God helps us (Colossians 3:5 + Romans 6:11). And we note that He did not say we become like His resurrection, **but we shall also be in His resurrection**; He has given us a pledge of the upcoming resurrection during our temporal life. This is the first resurrection = newness of life. If the Lord Christ grants us to die with Him in baptism, it is to provide us with the possibility of walking this way and struggling all the days of our exile so that we do not lose the grace of baptism or its fruit in us. For the authority of baptism does not stop at the limit of erasing our former sins, but it gives us security from the subsequent sins. But this requires showing a change of intention (mortification of sins, and renewal of the mind) for baptism is death and resurrection with a new life.

And now we understand why the Church chants and says "By Your death, O Lord, we preach and by Your resurrection, we confess" whereas we were supposed to be proud of and preach about the resurrection. But the question is... how do we preach... is it by speech? This is the weakest means of preaching. But preaching and evangelism are effective if we live by what we speak. If people see us living as dead to sin, this is preaching, and by this, we become the light of the world. And the next question would be... what makes us live as dead to sin? ...This is because we believe that we have a whole life of glory and joy in heaven, after we rise from the dead. But this requires first that we believe in the resurrection from the dead, and that the resurrection of Christ was for our sake, that is, for us to have a resurrection from the dead. Therefore, to live as dead to sin is because we confess that we have another life to live, because Christ rose from the dead.

**Verse (6): "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."**

**"That the body of sin might be done away with"** = refers to the evils of man. It does not mean

the physical body, therefore he said "**that we should no longer be slaves of sin**" = and did not say we become slaves to the flesh. The body is not an element of darkness that needs to be saved from and resisted; it is made by the good God, but we have corrupted it by the perversion of senses and emotions. When these death-causing actions are removed, the body appears in safety. And it is not the body that is crucified with Christ, but the moral behavior, or the corrupt nature that has been imposed on it and the senses of sin (this is what the Lord Christ meant when He said, "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off..."). And let us note that our partner in the journey is Christ with whom we die, so He gives us life with Him and gives us power, victory, support, a new mindset, and a new praise.

And when the body of sin dies, we are freed from the sin that was our master, and a new person rises to glorify God, like a seed planted to produce a beautiful tree.

"**Our old man...the body of sin**" = is the evil nature we were born with from our mothers' wombs, before faith and baptism. And when the old man dies, he is no longer able to use the external body parts as instruments of sin = **that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**

**Verse (7): "For he who has died has been freed from sin."**

This means: -

1. By death, the sin falls away from the accused.
2. By death, the punishment of the law is fulfilled in us.
3. The old man died and is no longer able to use the members as instruments of sin. Rather, the new man uses them as instruments of righteousness.

Therefore, in baptism, a person dies with Christ and thus accepts the sentence of death for his sins. And he rises with Christ, having obtained the verdict of acquittal from his sins (Romans 4:25). And he who dies ceases to sin and is not subject to the power of sin. With this death, the connection between man and sin is severed, unless a man chooses to return his body to its original state, that is, to return it to the slavery of sin.

**Verse (8): "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him"**

The Apostle Paul feared that the believer might find the way heavy because it is death with Christ, so he clarifies that our death from sin is not deprivation or loss but an exercise of the power of victory and support that we have in Christ, who has overcome sin and death. It is a life we will live victoriously with Christ. And victory in Christianity means that neither pain nor death frightens us, for the joy that Christ gives overcomes fear and pain (John 16:22), and neither distress bothers us because the peace that Christ gives surpasses the confusion in the mind, and peace prevails despite the existence of confusion in the mind (2 Corinthians 4:7-11 + Philippians 4:7). We rose with Him by His righteousness and holiness. We took life from His life; with this life we attain joy here and eternal life and eternal glory and joy there. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10), a better life here in joy and peace, and eternal glory is proclaimed there, but here it is still not proclaimed (Romans 8:18). And as long as there is union with Christ in His death, we necessarily unite with Him in His resurrection, for Christ rose and did not remain dead.

**Verse (9): "knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him."**

Christ has defeated death and abolished its dominion, and He is now in the glory of His Father and has given us His life to live by faith, and this life that we have obtained through baptism is eternal life, for Christ's life is eternal, so He will not die again. And even if we die physically, we will return and rise with this eternal life that we have taken. This is the meaning of "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11:25).

But the meaning of the Apostle's words also means that Christ died once in the flesh of humanity and rose with eternal life, thus giving us the possibility to die in the old body and continue to live eternally.

Therefore, if we want to crucify the body of sin and live for Christ, and not return to sin, this is possible, and sin will have no dominion over us as long as we are with Him. And although sin is very violent, Christ has destroyed its power, so we should not be afraid to walk with Him on the way. The verse means that just as Christ will not return to death after He has risen, so it is not right for us to return to sin after we have risen with Him and have begun to live the life of Christ. So why do we sentence our new inner man to death even though he is living the life of Christ?

**Verse (10): "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."**

Everything that happened to Christ's body has an extended effect. So, the act of His death is extended, and so is the act of His life. We are baptized and united with Him in His death "buried with Him in baptism" (Col 2:12) + "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death" (Rom 6:4), and thus our sins die. And so, we unite with Him in His resurrection "just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4) + (Rom 6:8), and thus we have a new life. Therefore, St John saw in his vision a "Lamb standing as though it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). Note that the Lamb that John saw here has two attributes, life (standing) and death (as if slain). In His baptism, Christ died with Adam's life, and in His resurrection, He rose with eternal life. Therefore, in baptism, we share in the two attributes, death by the old man, and life by Christ's eternal life. Baptism does not kill the old man definitively, because God wants to preserve our freedom of choice as we are created in His image. Then, in the sacrament of chrismation, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, filling us with grace. Grace helps us, it is a power given to those who want to live a life of mortification, i.e., to continue dead to the life of sin if they so desire. And it is given to those who want to walk in righteousness, power to walk in righteousness. Christ does not force anyone to do anything, but He supports with His grace those who want it. In baptism, we became in Christ, but those who do not want this steadfastness and want to revert to the state of sin will hear the voice of Christ saying, "I will vomit you out of my mouth" (Rev 3:16). That is, you will no longer remain steadfast in Me.

"**He died to sin**" = Christ did not die due to a weakness of His own, but because of our sins. He died in the flesh of humanity to give us death to the old body, the body of sin, to destroy our sins, dispel their power and dissolve their dominion. So, sin no longer has dominion over us, as long as we are in union with Him. And He died once and death did not close on Him, He rose, and He

will not die again after His resurrection. There is a beautiful verse expressing this, that "we are supported, but not fastened" (Ezk 41:6)

**"But the life that He lives, He lives to God"** = After He rose, He began to live His life to glorify God by giving human souls a holy life, He gives us His life and His righteousness and with them we glorify God... How? By giving us death to sin, and life in His righteousness, remaining steadfast in Him, establishing His Church as one body and He is the head of this body, and presenting us to the Father in the end as sons to the Father, submissive to Him and glorifying Him forever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

And the Apostle wants to say, if we have obtained an eternal acquittal and freedom from the dominion of sin over us, as Saint John says, "He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). Then by what logic do we return to sin again and lose our sonship to God? This would be like someone returning to the grave after rising alive.

**Verses (11-14): "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."**

In these verses, we see the concept of true consecration. The Apostle explains that we should consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. If Christ died for us to nullify the power of sin over us, it is only fitting that we surrender our hearts as a throne to Him. Therefore, if we die to sin, it will no longer have power over us and we will live for God in Christ Jesus, who reigns in us and establishes His kingdom within our hearts, offering all the members of our bodies and all our energies for His kingdom as instruments of righteousness after they were subject to lust as instruments of sin.

**Verse 11: "Dead to sin"** = The meaning is to judge yourself as a person dead to sin and without fear, for it no longer has dominion over us, but we have been acquitted of it, acquitted by what we have offered repentance and confessed to it. And after that, we cut off all our ties with it. And **"alive to God"** = just as Christ lives for God (verse 10), so you should live united with Christ, with a new life that is the life of Christ as the Apostle Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). And with this life that we obtained in baptism, we glorify God. This is the message of our new life "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16) + "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

**"In Christ Jesus our Lord"** = for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). So, we cannot live for God and glorify God with our lives without Christ. This is the meaning of **"the life that He lives, He lives to God"** (verse 10). Christ gave us His life "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21), and with His life, He uses our members for righteousness and to do works that glorify God. In Christ, we appear before God and live for the glory of the Father forever.

**Verse 12:** Therefore, sin should not rule and reign over your body, which is dead to sin. That is, we should not obey it, drawn and driven by the lusts of this body. Whoever does this and decides not to be driven by his lusts will find that grace helps him, the Holy Spirit calms the lusts, and the body becomes like a dead person in front of them. But if a person returns and becomes

lenient and begins to play with sin, his lusts immediately awaken, for man was and always will be free. Therefore, make your decision and use the power and authority that the Holy Spirit gives, and if you fall, hurry to repent. Notice that he said, "sin should not have dominion" = and he did not say do not let it exist there, for it is already there, as long as we carry a body that is susceptible to death, sin will fight us. But you should not let it rule. It has lost its ability to rule, so do not let it. If you start to obey it, it will rule. It's like a slave who was freed at a high price, so we say to him, do not enslave yourself to anyone again for he is now free with no master. That's why the Lord said, "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). And who does sin rule over? It is the one who runs after the lusts of the world, revives the old man, and sin reigns over him. Like a snake frozen from the snow, if I warm it in my pocket, as soon as it wakes up, it will bite me, I will get poisoned and die. This frozen snake is the sin that grace has killed.

**Verse 13:** "**Your members**" refers to the foot, the hand, the eye, as well as understanding, intelligence, will, and all physical, mental, and spiritual capacities. Do not present them as instruments and means for sin, so that sin does not fight you and triumph over you through these members. Let's be careful not to subject any of our physical senses to sin... For example: If you get angry, do not move your tongue to curse or your hand to hit, because when there are no instruments for sin, sin will gradually disappear day by day.

The Apostle is not content with merely warning against falling into sin, but he adds a positive aspect to our spiritual life. Believers should not only refrain from evil, but they should also present themselves, their whole being, as a consecrated offering to God. Before he asks us to present our members as instruments of righteousness to God, he asks us to present ourselves **as being alive from the dead**. We have obtained a new, holy life. Meaning that our physical members will not be sanctified unless our entire being is sanctified. The meaning is to set a new goal for our lives, which is to live to please God, and accept to be like Christ, alive for God (verse 10), i.e., to live for the glory of God. Then we dedicate every member of our body to God so that they become instruments of virtue, used to show the glory of God. That is through practicing good deeds. This is what it means that the spirit convicts of sin (our members die to sin) and then over righteousness (we do righteousness) (John 16:8). The Apostle here emphasizes that the call to die with Christ is not a call to destroy the entity of the body but to sanctify it. [The hand, instead of using it for beating and stealing (instruments of sin), dies for sin, so it does not require these actions. Then use it (as instruments of righteousness) in prayer and helping those who are in need and serving God.]. The old man is the one who is crucified, not the members of the body. The call to die with Christ is not a negative call for loss and dispersion, but a positive call for gain. For death here is gain, as it enjoys fellowship with the crucified and risen Christ, who is capable of establishing our members as instruments of righteousness, giving them sanctification from His own. We have received from Adam a body whose senses, members, and capacities (its thinking and will...) are open to sin (but they are not forced to submit to it). But Christ came to kill in us this wounded nature that is open to sin, and he killed sin in the body, so sin lost its dominion over the members of the man, and Christ freed our members and made them open to God to hear Him and see Him.

**Instruments of righteousness and instruments of unrighteousness:** = An instrument is used by someone. Here it refers to the members of my body. If I give them to Christ, who gave me His life, they become **instruments of righteousness**. If I leave them for the life of the old man within me, they become **instruments of unrighteousness**.

The Lord Christ says that the Holy Spirit "**convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness...**"

(John 16:8).

**Convicts of sin** = The Holy Spirit convicts us if the old man is still strong within us and uses the members of our body as instruments of unrighteousness, so we use them to commit sin.

**Convicts of righteousness** = The Holy Spirit convicts us that we do not use the members of our body as instruments of righteousness and do righteous deeds with them, by which we glorify God.

**Verse 14:** And you can reach this level of spiritual life because **sin** has no dominion over you = **it will not rule over you** (it will not take possession of you) because grace will condemn it, making it as if it were dormant within me as if it were dead (Romans 8:3). Because you are not under the dominion of the law. Its function was to distinguish between good and evil without giving the power to attain a life of righteousness. The law is just a mirror that shows flaws, but it is incapable of changing anything. But now you are members of the kingdom of righteousness, your past sins have been forgiven, and through this grace, you have become capable of walking safely on the path of holiness and virtue. This confirms the new possibilities that have become ours through the grace that works in us in the waters of baptism as well as in our daily struggle. The possibilities that give victory.

**Under grace:** Grace is a power at work within us, killing in us the love of sin. It is from God's care, providence, and guidance that leads a person to his eternal inheritance. If a person submits to the flow of grace, sin no longer rules over him. So, grace here is God's secret, hidden power that dwells in the members of a person living under submission to grace, who controls his desires and kills his members to wrong desires (Romans 12:1). The Holy Spirit gives to those who want it, power and conviction (Jeremiah 20:7) to leave sin and live in righteousness, with conviction first and then the power to act second (Romans 8:26).

Therefore, it is said... **The law** condemns... and the spirit aids... and it aids with a power called **grace**.

**Verse (15): "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!"**

After all that has been said, should we understand freedom in Christ as a return to sin? How could we, when we understand that the work of grace is to condemn sin, meaning that sin no longer has dominion over us, and we no longer desire it. Therefore, if a person sins and says, "I am free," in reality he is enslaved to sin and it still has dominion over him, and consequently, there is no grace in this person. True freedom is servitude to God, in which a person finds a supporting power to do righteousness. It is the servitude of voluntary love, not the servitude of compulsory violence. And let's note that grace and sin do not coexist, for no one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24 + John 8:34,36). Some have misunderstood the law of grace and freedom and said, "We sin because we are free." But this is like someone who exploits the generosity of his friend with betrayal and mistreatment. The redemption that Christ accomplished for me set me free, and I must not enslave myself to sin again (John 8:36).

And there are those who misunderstand the work of grace when they imagine that grace means forgiveness for any sin by the blood of Christ as long as a person believes in Christ!! This is a strange statement because it means that grace is a permit to commit any sin and the blood of Christ forgives it, and this is against the concept of holiness. Saint Paul the Apostle says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). And "Holiness, without which



no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Grace, if present, condemns sin, that is, it suppresses it, suffocates it, and completely weakens its dominion (refer to the explanation of Romans 8:3). Indeed, grace also helps to do righteousness. If grace is present, there will be no sin, or let's say it weakens a lot, and if sin is present, then grace is not present.

Christ incarnated, died, and rose not only to forgive sin, but to put to death within us the old man, and to establish within us the new man with whom we walk in righteousness. We become a new creation that can be saved when the old man dies within us, and we also live walking in righteousness. This is what the Lord Christ said to John the Baptist when He went to be baptized by him, "For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). This means that through baptism, a person can walk in righteousness and thus be saved. In baptism, we die to the old body and live by the life of Christ and by it, we walk in righteousness. If we walk in sin, the Spirit convicts us of sin, and if we are lazy about doing righteousness, the Spirit convicts us of righteousness (John 16:8).

**So, let's understand that grace and sin do not coexist.**

**Therefore, anyone who imagines that grace means forgiveness of any sin for the believer, and that the believer cannot perish no matter what they do, such a person is still dead and far from salvation.**

**Because grace leads a person to die to a life of sin and leads them to do righteousness.**

**Verse (16): "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"**

We are before two masters, each of whom asks us to obey him, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:17). The two masters are:

1. **The Holy Spirit:** He calls us to live in the heavens and do righteousness, and He aids our weaknesses.

2. **The Flesh:** This refers to the corrupt desires of the old man, which call us to do evil.

And whoever we choose to become slaves to, we must obey. It is in our freedom that we choose the master we obey.

**Whomever you present yourselves as slaves to obey** = Whoever we accept to be slaves to, we must obey.

Whoever we direct our lives and ourselves to, we become his slaves and commit to obeying him, there is only one master.

And God as a master justifies and gives life if we obey him. As for sin as a master, it leads to death. As we have seen in the introduction of the chapter, the inner man is the one who leads the external members. And we are free to make one of them grow and the other wither, or vice versa. Whoever is stronger among them will lead the external members. If the new man grows, the one you received in baptism, he will lead the outward man to obey God in righteousness = this man's members become instruments of righteousness. Conversely, if a man changes his goal, pursuing the desires of his flesh, this gives the opportunity for the growth of the old man, and if this leads the outer man, his members become instruments of sin and lead him to sin and death. Note that there are those who are enslaved to their wrong desires, and there are those who are enslaved to

righteousness, for example, a servant whose health is exhausted but insists on service, and cannot leave his service, or a patient insists on fasting, and finds his pleasure in it.

**There are two masters fighting to use our members: the new man and the old man.  
And the stronger one is the one who will lead our members to righteousness or to sin.  
And in our freedom, we support one of them to become stronger.**

**Verse (17): "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered."**

**You obeyed from the heart** = The freedom we exercise is not out of force or compulsion but is exercised through love with our full will. **Form** = a word that conveys an original imprint of the teaching.

**Verse (18): "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."**

When they were freed from sin, they became associated with righteousness, they could only do righteousness as if they were **slaves to righteousness**, and they find their pleasure in it and cannot but do it. So, freedom in Christ is servitude to righteousness.

**Verse (19): "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness."**

**"I speak in human terms"** = I speak to you according to the weakness of your nature, which is still physical to the extent that you speak and believe that doing virtue is as if it were servitude, knowing that servitude to righteousness is in fact freedom for the body and the spirit. Because you have not yet grown in grace, you may imagine that Christ or the church wants to enslave you. This happens with spiritual beginners, if we tell a young man that there is a spiritual day we spend in prayers and meetings, he will object to their abundance, but we tell him in his language, let it be, you imagine that these prayers and meetings involve servitude, but they are servitude to righteousness, and if he practices this time after time he will discover the pleasure of God's way and that it is not servitude but it develops the inner man to live in the heavens. There are those who object and say that the church enslaves us with many prayers and fasts. We respond to them saying "Agreed... But which is better, that the church enslaves you with its fasts and prayers, or that you be enslaved to sin with its scandals, but you must know that if you enslave yourself to righteousness with your freedom, this will lead you to true freedom, as is happening now and a person comes who has tasted the pleasure of fasts, asking to fast and do Metanoias in the Holy Fifty.

**"Slaves of uncleanness"** = That is, to serve sin, which defiles a person. And there is nothing harsher than enslaving the body to sin or lower than sending the son to herd with pigs.

**"You presented"** = That is, by your choice, for Satan has no authority to compel us. This is what justifies God in the destruction of sinners, for they sell themselves to do evil.

**"Lawlessness leading to more lawlessness"** = One sin makes the heart more inclined to another. And every wrong act strengthens and reinforces wrong habits. Whoever walks in the way of sin, his life becomes worse, and his heart becomes harder. Whoever sows the wind reaps the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). This becomes a slave to uncleanness and lawlessness to serve sin.

**"Present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness"** = When our members cease to serve sin, they should not remain idle but be used in the service of God. This begins by force, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence (Matthew 11:12). But whoever does so, the Holy Spirit leads him to holiness, that is, the whole person is dedicated to God, and this is accompanied by peace and joy. And let's note that servitude to virtue is nothing but freedom.

\* Therefore, whoever presents his members as slaves to sin... moves from sin to sin... and this leads to death.

\* And whoever presents his members as slaves to righteousness... moves from one act of righteousness to another and walks in the way of holiness... and this is the path of eternal life.

**Verse (20): "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness."**

When you were slaves to sin, you were freeing yourselves from the obligations of righteousness and you were calling yourselves free. But you were in the most severe stages of degradation and in the end, destruction. In fact, this is not freedom, but stolen freedom. So, which is better, to be enslaved to righteousness, the end of which is life and now joy, or to be enslaved to sin and live now in bitterness and the end is destruction.

**Verse (21): "What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death."**

Here is a comparison between slavery to sin and slavery to righteousness. The former is harsh, shameful, and its end is death, and it bears shame, while the latter bears holiness and eternal life. The question here for them is what did you benefit from a life of sin, but now you are ashamed of your past life when you remember it, indeed you were exposed to death because of your sins.

**Verse (22): "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."**

But now that you have been freed from sin through baptism and have submitted yourselves to God, you have certainly gained growth and progress in the life of holiness = "**you have your fruit to holiness**" = you are the ones who can judge your fruit now in the light of the life of holiness, compared to your bitter fruit in the days of sin. And note Paul's saying that without holiness, we will not see God (Hebrews 12:14) and the end is eternal life.

**Verse (23): "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

The word "**wages**" used by the Apostle here means a meager wage given to a slave and comes to mean "adamah" (food or dip) given to the slave to sustain his life. It is a term that refers to the temporary meager pleasure of sin, because the wages of sin that are paid to those who worship it is death. The Apostle wants to say to those who lived in sin, enslaved to a trivial pleasure, that you were then miserable slaves and the end is eternal death.

As **for the gift of God**, it is a free gift and not a wage, this is what God generously bestows on His servants with all love and joy, and it is **eternal life** that is realized for us through our union **in Christ Jesus our Lord**.

# Chapter Seven

**This chapter discusses three topics.**

1. Through Christ's redemption, and by the grace the believer has received, the believer's connection with the law has been cut off ... Verses (1-6).
2. Why was the law there in the first place? It was a tool to reveal sin ... Verses (7-13).
3. Why did the law fail? Because it could not cure the sin that dwells within me ... Verses (14-25).

**Verse (1): "Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?"**

The major problem in the early church was that Christian Jews wanted the Gentiles to become Jewish before joining the church and to adhere to the law, such as circumcision. Paul didn't want to attack the law, but he wanted them to understand that the real joy is in Christ's redemption and righteousness, and to hold onto not the formalities of the law but the grace they've received. They should understand that the law was a primitive stage in dealing with God, whereas grace is an elevation in dealing with God. This undermines the pride of the Jews in being the keepers of the law, without attacking the law, for the law is sacred as it is God's law. But it, as an initial stage, handed us over to Christ, who is the highest stage in dealing with God. The law's function has ended as it handed us over to Christ. The law exposed sin but did not treat it, so it does not justify sinners. The apostle put before us the example of two grooms and one bride - the grooms are the law and Christ, and the bride is me. The bride was linked to the first groom. If one of them, the groom or the bride, dies, the other party is freed; this marriage has ended. Since the apostle didn't want to say that the law dies, as it is God's law, he said that the bride died with Christ in baptism. Note that in the bride's connection with the law, the law sentenced her to death because she was a sinner; the law condemns. And here she has died with Christ in baptism, so she stepped out of the circle of the law, for it has no authority over her. Even the harshest laws can only kill the body and have no authority beyond that. In this way, she was freed, and it became her right to be linked with another, who is Christ, after she was freed from the law.

**Verse (2): "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband."**

The woman, who represents the Jewish nation or me, is bound to her husband as long as he is alive according to the teachings of the law. The most important thing is that there is no need to convert the Gentiles to Judaism because they are already freed from the law and not bound by it. The death of one party nullifies the contract between the woman and the letter and rituals of the law. But of course, the commitment to the ethics of the law is not nullified, nor are the prophecies that bear witness to Christ.

**Verse (3): "So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man."**

The other man represents the acts of divine grace that do not agree with the literalities of the law, such as sacrifices, circumcision, and purifications. If her husband dies or if the contract falls (by her death), she is not considered an adulteress if she marries another man (who is Christ).

**Verse (4): "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."**

The Apostle could not say that the law is dead, for it is God's sacred law (Romans 3:31 + Romans 14:7). But he said "**you also have become dead**" = through baptism, the law's judgment of death was executed in you, for the law condemns to death those who sin. The one who died is the old inner man, to live for Christ. But by his death, he was freed from the judgment of the first man, that is, the literal law. And Christ rose alive with eternal life to enter as a groom for the church, which the first groom, the law, condemned to death. As for Christ, the new groom, he united with her in baptism to give her his eternal life.

Our death to the law because of our union with Christ does not mean the collapse of the law, but rather the fulfillment of its goal by presenting us to the other man who was raised from the dead so that we may rise with him "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). Indeed, we understand from the prophet Hosea that the law was temporary until Christ came, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes (Christ) and rains righteousness on you" (Hosea 10:12).

"**You also have become dead to the law**" means the law has condemned me to death because of my sin, but through baptism I died with Christ when I united with Christ's body that died on the cross. "**That you may be married to another**" means to be linked to another, that is, Christ **who was raised from the dead**.

And now, after we have united with Christ in baptism, it is no longer the law that rules over us, condemning us to death or granting us life. What rules over us now is...

**whether we are steadfast in Christ or not.**

That's why the Lord Christ asks us to remain steadfast in Him "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). And we put alongside this method of steadfastness in the life of Christ "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). So, those who crucify their bodies with passions and desires, Christ's life is established in them and they become a living, fruitful branch (Galatians 5:22-24).

And just as we unite with Christ in His death, we unite with Him in His resurrection "And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). And by our union with Him (as the fruit of this marriage), we gain His eternal life. And whoever has His life bears virtuous fruits of life that glorify God = **that we should bear fruit to God**.

The living person bears fruit just as the living plant does, and we have become alive with the life of Christ within us. While in our relationship with the law we did not bear fruit, not because of a lack in the law but because of our nature of disobedience. And the result was that the law condemned us to death. The fruit of sin is death and the fruit of life with God is righteousness and eternal life. And now, if we are the bride of Christ, it is a betrayal of Him to leave Him and be for another, therefore it was said that the love of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

### **The relationship of the Christian now with the law**

The Apostle Paul said in the previous chapter that we are not under the law but under grace (verse 14). The law was like a mirror revealing faults without fixing them, while grace is a power capable of helping and able to condemn sin (see commentary on Romans 8:3). So now, what is the relationship of the believing Christian with the law?

1. Christ fulfilled the law. He did not break a single commandment but fulfilled it for us, thus becoming the perfect man, and then died for us. Christ was not supposed to die because he was without sin. But he willingly gave up his spirit on the cross for us. He was the perfect man, which is what it means that Christ was born under the law (Galatians 4:4), meaning he fully complied with the law. In fact, he is the only one who fulfilled the law. Therefore, anyone who abides in him is considered perfect in him despite their sins (Colossians 1:28), blameless (Ephesians 1:3), and without judgment (Romans 8:1), and thus, they are saved. To abide in Christ, one needs baptism in its correct sense, which means to remain buried with Christ, which we call a life of mortification, i.e., to remain dead to sin, so as not to live in the body of sin, i.e., the old man, again (Romans 6:11) + (Colossians 3:5). And the law does not condemn to death someone who is already dead. In the court, if the accused dies during the trial, it is said that "the case is dropped."

2. The role of the Holy Spirit is to establish us in Christ, which is why the sacrament of the Myron (Chrism) is called the sacrament of confirmation or fixing. The Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove, as the dove always returns to its home, and the Holy Spirit establish us in Christ beginning from baptism. Then he continues with us in comforting, teaching, and helping (Romans 8:26) so that we remain steadfast in Christ and thus are considered perfect. That's why we hear the bridegroom addressing his bride in the Song of Songs saying, "Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one..." (Song of Songs 5:2). She is his sister because he became "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). She is his dove because she always returns to him with the help of the Holy Spirit. And she is perfect because she has become steadfast in him. This explains that "the Lord smelled a soothing aroma" when Noah offered his burnt offering (Genesis 8:21), as the burnt offerings refer to Christ's obedience even unto the cross. God smelled the aroma of pleasure not for Christ's obedience, as Christ's will is the same as his Father's will, the Father and the Son are one. But because, through the obedience of Christ, we returned to the Father as sons and are considered obedient in Christ.

3. Christ, through his death, completed the redemption and the rule of curse and death. And we died with Him in baptism with our old self, so the law's rule was fulfilled in us, and we must remain dead in the life of mortification.

4. We do not die with Christ and remain dead, but we rise with Christ, united with Him, so we have His eternal life (note that what dies in baptism is the old man). The law condemns to death those who can die. But as long as we have the eternal life of Christ which does not die (Romans 6:9), the law has no authority over us to condemn us to death. Of course, this is for those who are

steadfast and abide in Christ.

5. As for the commandments of the law, they are necessary for us, and the prophecies of the law about Christ are proof of the validity of everything that came in the New Testament. The rituals of the law are a clear explanation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The stories of wars in the Old Testament we now understand as the spiritual wars that Satan fights against us (Ephesians 6:12), and from them, we know when we defeat him and when he defeats us. The Old Testament is a means of illustrating the New Testament.

6. The Christian filled with the Spirit has the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and we see the Apostle Paul saying here that those who have these fruits do not need the commandments of the law = "against such things there is no law". So, whoever possesses the fruit of self-control will not covet what belongs to others. And whoever's heart is filled with the fruit of love for God does not need a commandment telling him not to worship another god. And those who have the fruit of love for people do not need the commandment not to kill.

7. For the spiritual beginner who has not yet been filled with the Spirit, the law is a guide for him, and he should try to comply with all the moral commandments of the law, like the Ten Commandments. As Saint Gregory said, "You gave me the Law as an aid."

8. Anyone who tries to comply with all the commandments of the law discovers his need for Christ. How can I implement the commandment "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5)? This can only be implemented with the Holy Spirit, whom Christ sends after completing the redemption and his ascension. The Holy Spirit is the one who pours God's love into our hearts (John 15:26 + Romans 5:5). And how can I implement the commandment "You shall not covet"? This commandment can only be implemented by someone who is satisfied with Christ. And whoever discovers his need for Christ will turn to Christ, asking for help and to know his sweet, satisfying personality. So, the law leads to Christ.

9. As for the ceremonial law, the relationship between the Christian and it has completely ended. The Christian no longer purifies himself with water, but the purification is with the blood of Christ. We no longer offer bloody sacrifices according to the rite of Aaron, but the Eucharist according to the rite of Melchizedek. And circumcision is no longer a condition to become children of God, but this is done through baptism.

10. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10 and see the explanation of the verse in the book of Revelation). We find that the prophets were not content with revealing the sins of the people, but the prophecies of the prophets talked about the corruption of man with a promise of a savior who would come to provide a solution to this corruption. In fact, we see in their prophecies the impossibility of man changing his flawed nature that has been corrupted without this savior. As the prophet Jeremiah says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil." (Jeremiah 13:23) (Please refer to the first introduction to the book of Isaiah the prophet "Introduction to the Prophets"). The prophets were looking forward to the coming of this savior as Isaiah the prophet said, for example, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!" (Isaiah 64:1).

### **Noah's Ark is an example of baptism**

Refer to (1 Peter 3:19-21), we find that Saint Peter saw that the story of the flood and Noah's Ark was a representation of baptism. But why? The sinners outside the Ark were reveling in their debauchery, not believing Noah's warnings, and refusing to enter the Ark.



How did the sinners in their revelry and debauchery see Noah and his sons entering the Ark? They said of them that they had sentenced themselves to death inside this wooden box. And they lost all the pleasures of the world.

And how did Noah see the fate of these people? Noah, because he believed in God's word that He would destroy the world because of their sins, saw them as having sentenced themselves to death. This is the living faith... he believed in God's word and executed the sentence of death for the world in himself, and entered into a closed box, that is the Ark, and thus he had life. What Noah did is what we call here mortification, as he separated from the evils of the world and its wrongful pleasures and entered the Ark as if dead to the world, and this gave him eternal life. And this is what the Apostle Paul said, "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). And this is what Noah executed, who was considered by the world to have crucified himself when he separated from the wrongful pleasures of the world, and with his faith in God's words, he considered the world crucified, that is, going to death.

However, this mortification is not gloom, but a continuous ascent and tasting of the heavenly things. We also see the Apostle Paul clarifying this and saying that the fruits of the Spirit "love, joy..." are for those who have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:22-24). To taste the heavenly things means to ascend from the earthly things, and ascension requires resurrection first, and resurrection requires crucifixion and death first.

**Verse (5): "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death."**

"**When we were in the flesh**" = The meaning of "**the flesh**" is that when the old man was the one leading and enslaving my members. And he did not say when we were in the law so that no one would underestimate the law. Also, by saying "**in the flesh**", he means when we were without grace to support us and condemn the old man, thus preventing his dominance.

"**The sinful passions which were aroused by the law**" = That is, the sins that the law exposed. The diseases were there and were killing people without anyone knowing, then medicine came and exposed them. However, the law exposes and commands, but it does not assist. "**were at work in our members**" = Because the cause of sin is not the members themselves, but the thoughts, and the sin that dwells within me, that is, the old man who leads the members and has authority. The apostle wants to say that now, as a result of this new spiritual union with Christ, we have the grace that condemns sin, and we also have the life of Christ, so we will bear fruit for the virtuous life. That's because when we were living a physical life, sinful passions were at work in the members of our body. It used what the law forbade doing as a motivation for itself. It had power and a bad influence on the members of our body. "**to bear fruit to death**" = We commit sins that lead us to death (James 1:15).

**Verse (6): "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."**

"**We have been delivered**" = The Greek word indicates that there is no longer any effect or

action because we have died. **"Having died to what we were held by"** = The one who died is the old man who was holding onto sin (not the law and not the flesh). This verse is very similar to the apostle's saying, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23). The meaning is that those who have these fruits of the Holy Spirit do not need the commandments of the law. Such a person is alive with the life of Christ in him, the Holy Spirit has established him in Christ and poured God's love into his heart, and thus the commandments are written on his heart, "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts." (Jeremiah 31:31-34). And whoever loves God in this way will fulfill the commandments out of love for God and not out of fear of the law.

**"Held by"** = in its grip. The old man was holding and enslaving the members of my body and leading them. And now, the bond that we were held by has been broken and dissipated (died), so that the sin we were held by no longer holds us.

**"So that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit"** = We are no longer enslaved to the old state when the literal law prevailed. But we have the worship of the Spirit, as we have become a new creation. We have become sons who rejoice in having our relationship with God, our Heavenly Father. Prayer and glorification have become joy and life in the heavens, not a duty. And obeying the commandment has become out of the love of sons for their Father whom they recognized His love (John 14:23), not fear of Him. But the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), and there is a punishment for those who violate the commandment, a person fears it and does not sin. In the worship of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit has given man new capabilities beyond the level of the law [Do not commit adultery has become do not look lustfully, and do not kill has become do not get angry, and while virgins were rare in the Old Testament, their number increased greatly in the New Testament, and the number of martyrs increased, and Christ taught us to love our enemies] so what governs us now is not the law that condemns, but what leads us now is the Spirit that helps (Romans 8:26) the Spirit who pours God's love into our hearts. We no longer depend on formalities like the Jews (2 Corinthians 3:3, 6).

**"Oldness of the letter"** = **Oldness** = antiquity, i.e., literalism that Jews want to live by. **The letter** = the law. The following story was published in Al-Ahram newspaper, and it expresses the literalism of the Jews and the appearance of their worship without spirit. The law forbids work on Saturday, so Jews used to hire Muslim Palestinian workers to work for them, even in lighting and extinguishing lights. As for our worship as Christians, it is in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

**Verse (7): "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"**

After expressing his joy at being liberated from the law, he questions the listener, is there a flaw in the law = **Is the law sin?** = Is it a law of evil, and how can it be so when God is the one who established it? **Certainly not!** = without it, man would have degenerated into animality. What we need to understand is that the law is like a mirror examining man, it exposes sin but does not treat it, it opens the wound and prepares it for the healing that was in Christ. It is incapable of providing assistance to man, which grace provides. The mirror (the law) reveals the flaws, so we search for a doctor, and grace is the cosmetic doctor who treats. The law was our tutor to bring

us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), it even makes us search for him and wait for him. But the law revealed the nature of disobedience in me. With this nature, everything prohibited becomes desired. And this was not a flaw in the law but in human nature, which when it desires something and is prevented from it, lust flares up in it even more. **"You shall not covet"** = This is the tenth commandment.

**Verse (8): "But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead."**

Sin was dead in terms of man's awareness, meaning that man was not aware of it as a corrupting and killing evil element. But it was indeed present, practiced by man without realizing it or its danger, and it was killing him without his knowledge. This verse is similar to what the Lord Christ said, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin" (John 15:22).

**"Apart from the law sin was dead"** = The Apostle does not mean that sin did not exist without the law, but rather that its activity was more like a state of death without the law: - e. g. , a snake in winter is frozen and is more like dead, and when the sun shines with its heat (the law), the snake moves and comes back to life. Here the law is mentioned as exposing man's readiness for sin. It revealed the rebellious nature in me, and increased the sin of stubbornness. This is the meaning of the forbidden is desired. This is what made the commandment arouse in me the desire for sin. The man is to blame who turned the readiness for sin into an act of transgression with his will and love for exploring evil. **"But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment"** = taking opportunity means that it declared war against me and stimulated my desires under the pretext that everything forbidden is desired (this is the nature of disobedience and rebellion that has become in man after the fall) as I tell a man to open all these cupboards, except this one, you will find him opening it and maybe it's the first cupboard he opens. This is what made Solomon say that stolen water is sweet (Proverbs 9:17). And let's know that man by natural law, i.e., the conscience, knew that sin is wrong, and the law came to define it and precisely define desire. And man knew desire before the law (Sodom and Gomorrah / Potiphar's wife... ) but the law exposed it to the outside and legalized it (it became governed by laws). And let's note that Paul, who was blameless in terms of righteousness in the law, was feeling that in him was **all desire**. The sin that dwelled in him was what produced every desire in him because of the corrupt nature. And sin seized an opportunity with the commandment, this Paul the Apostle quoted from the serpent's behavior with Eve, i.e., the verse can be modified, and the word devil can be put instead of sin. And since Adam's fall, everything forbidden has become desired because of the nature of rebellion and disobedience that has become in Adam.

**But is the law to be blamed?** Absolutely not. Let's compare between the Jewish people and the Gentiles who reached an extraordinary level of degradation. Their philosophers said that sexual perversion is a privilege for the masters that should not be enjoyed by the slaves, and with this, they degraded to a level lower than animals. But the law preserved the Jews and minimized their sins as much as possible and relatively controlled them, so they became better than the Gentiles, and this is the meaning of "the law has given me aid". Without the law, the Jews would have degraded to a level lower than animals like the Gentiles.

**Verse (9): "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived"**

**and I died."**

His saying "**I was alive once**" is similar to a poor person who does not know the pleasures of life, or a sick person who does not enjoy anything saying "It's barely living". He was imagining in his illusions that he was alive and in a good state, but he was dead because of sin even without a commandment, as sin is deadly. But when the sunlight (the law) appeared inside the room (my heart), the filth inside was revealed, and the frozen snake revived because of the heat of the sun, this is the meaning of "**sin revived**" = it revived after it was not apparent to me. And "**I died**" = I knew that because of sin and my inner deviation that I discovered, I am going to die.

Before the law, sin and desire existed, and because of them God destroyed the world with the flood and burned Sodom and Gomorrah. Then the law came to add a stronger accusation to man. Whoever does not obey the commandment falls into transgression. And man knew that he would die because of transgression, but he was unable to fix his condition, nor correct his corrupt deviation and tendency to apostasy.

**Another example:** A person went to the doctor and the doctor told him that he has a deadly disease inside him. He was living, suffering from some symptoms, but did not know the cause. And when he found out about the disease, the disease became the focus of his attention and preoccupation, and he knew he was going to die because of the disease.

**Verse (10): "And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death."**

Here the Apostle absolves the commandment of any flaw, and the proof is that many found life because of it from the righteous of the Old Testament. But the flaw was in those who violated it.

**Verse (11): "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me."**

By replacing the word sin with the word devil, we find that this is what the devil did when he deceived Eve using the commandment, and that was by mixing a part of the truth with a part of the lie. And this is what the devil always does (for whoever wants to justify drinking alcohol for himself claims that the Apostle Paul said that a little wine is good for the stomach, and Paul never said this, refer to 1 Timothy 5:23). The devil also took the prohibition of the commandment for some sins as something that stirred man to commit them. The deception has been ongoing since the serpent told Eve "You will not surely die", it deceived them and killed them. The commandment led me to death because the sin that dwelled in me took a motive from the commandment and deceived me, thus killing me. Just as the serpent aroused in Eve the desire to be like God, taking the opportunity from God's commandment to Adam and Eve.

**Verse (12): "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."**

He justifies the law and blames the human. He says that the law is holy, and every commandment of its commandments is holy, just and good. And God gave this good law for the sake of reforming humanity. All its goals are good.

**Verse (13): "Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful."**

**"Has then what is good become death to me?"** Did the good commandment become the cause of my death? Certainly not, but sin is the cause of my death, not the commandment. And does a just judge who sentences a criminal to death become a murderer?

**"But sin." To appear sinful** = Sin hid behind the commandment, deceiving man, and portraying sin with its pleasure as good, and hiding from him that its punishment is sorrow, grief, slavery, and the end is death. **Producing death in me through what is good** (the commandment) = As it deceives me, I am attracted by my desire and I die.

We now see the ugliness of sin as it is deceptive, it portrays to us that violating the good commandment will give pleasure, but it hides from me that violating the commandment leads to death.

**"So that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful"** = The ugliness of sin has been revealed from its consequences (death, curse, sorrow, destruction, pain...). It showed how bad this sin is, that through the law, which is holy and good, it brought me death. And that's because.

[1] The nature of rebellion that has become in me and was born with it. [2] Violating the commandment has become a transgression.

But the fault is not in the commandment but in the one who received the commandment and did not believe that it is for his benefit.

The sun brings out a beautiful fragrance from the flower garden and a rotten smell from the heap of garbage. The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. One word can be a life opportunity for one person and a cause of death for another. It was even said about Christ himself that he was destined for the fall and rise of many (Luke 2:34).

**"Sin is exceedingly sinful"** (Romans 7:13).

Perhaps Adam's sin of "eating from the tree" was a minor sin, but it turned out that sin does not stop at a limit, but it is:- 1) It increases and inflates to terrifying limits. 2) It spreads like an epidemic disease that spreads quickly among people.

**1) It increases, inflates, and is boundless:**

We find Adam, the beloved of God, when God asked him, he directs the blame to God himself and says "the woman you gave me", as if God is the one responsible for his sin since he made him a woman to help him. And Adam's offspring inherited the sin microbe: Let's look at the state that man has reached. The downward slope began with Cain killing his brother. The matter even reached the point of defiance against God "Am I my brother's keeper". Therefore, we liken sin and the sinner to a man who fell on a hill slope and kept rolling down. Nothing will stop this. He will continue to roll down to the lowest point in the pit unless God's mercy catches him. When the series of sins begins, nothing stops it. Therefore, we hear the saying of the Revelation "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines" (Song of Songs 2:15). The little foxes refer to the little sins, but these grow and grow until they become something ugly. This is what God warned Cain about "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies

at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." (Genesis 4:7) The meaning is that inside you is a little fox, that is a small sin, which is anger at your brother Abel. If you repent and back down, the matter will end, and I will accept you. But if you refuse, there is a bigger sin at the door, which is to kill your brother. And if you accept it, there is a greater sin at the door, which is defiance against God.

**2) And the decline on the hill does not only mean the increase in the size of sin, but also its spread:-**

Let's look at what happened to the family of Cain, and what happened later when the sons of Seth married the daughters of Cain. We found that the whole earth was corrupted "And the LORD was sorry that He had made man" (Genesis 6:6). And God destroyed all creation except for Noah and his sons.

And here the meaning of the Apostle Paul's statement "sin is exceedingly sinful" (Romans 7:13) becomes clear. Sin increases in size and from evil to worse, and from a limited sin in a few people to a widespread sin among all people. And when sin spreads among people in this way, God's strike is collective. This is what happened when God allowed the captivity of the kingdom of Israel (the Northern Kingdom/Kingdom of the Ten Tribes) by Assyria in 722 BC. Then Judah's captivity (the Southern Kingdom) by Babylon in 586 BC. This explains the saying "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Exodus 20:5). That is, if sin continues to spread and reaches the fourth generation, then sin has spread among all, so the strike becomes comprehensive, as happened in the captivity of Assyria and Babylon, and then what happened to all Jews during the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus the Roman in 70 AD. **And why was this destruction of Jerusalem?.**

Let's see the state that humans reached from the hardness of the days of Christ the Holy Righteous who justified everyone.

**\*Pilate:** "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person" (Matthew 27:24).

**\*Pilate's wife:** "Have nothing to do with that just man" (Matthew 27:19).

**\*Judas:** He himself confessed his innocence and said "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).

**\*The chief priests:** They did not accept the return of the silver that Judas took and refused to return it to the temple because they knew it was illegitimate money. They brought witnesses knowing they were false witnesses and bought with the silver a "field of blood" (Matthew 27:7-8). And all this while Christ was "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). \*And what was everyone's position towards him: The chief priests/priests/scribes/Pharisees/Romans/the people who cry "Crucify him and release Barabbas the thief the murderer". All these positions are full of hatred, dislike, envy, and without reason (John 15:25). Here we understand the meaning of **"those who hate me"** in (Exodus 20:5). They hated Christ the Son of God without reason. Because of sin, God offered his son as a burnt offering on the cross. Corruption, hatred, malice, cruelty, and the desire to kill have spread. And against whom?! Against the Son of God who was going about doing good. The matter did not reach the love of sin, but the hatred of God.

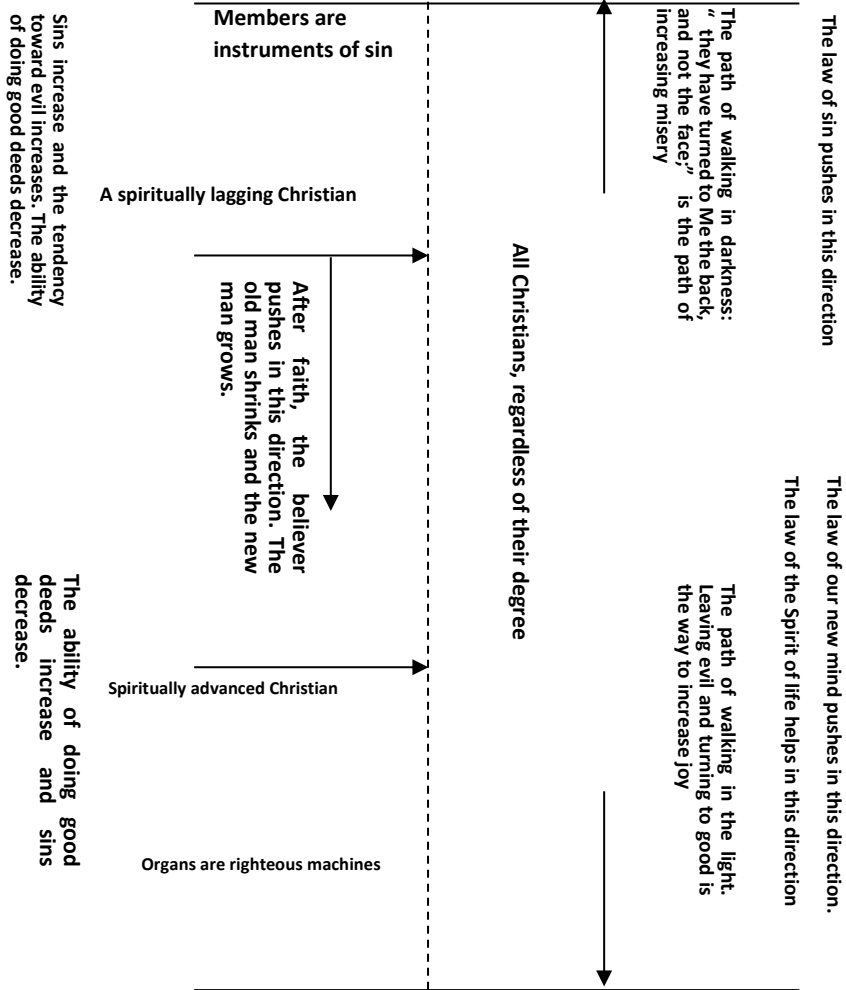
**Verses (14-25): "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is**

**good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another 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. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."**

Some have said that the Apostle Paul in these verses expresses his state before grace, and in Chapter 8 expresses his state after grace. This is not correct. What is the need for the Apostle Paul to write about his state before grace? And they say, is it reasonable that the Apostle Paul, after grace, says sin dwells in me!! We say that Paul wrote to Timothy about himself saying "sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15), and he asks Timothy to flee from the love of money (1 Timothy 6:11) and asks him to flee from youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22). And this Timothy is in the episcopal degree and ordains bishops (1 Timothy 5:22). He writes to the Galatians that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (Galatians 5:17). And this conflict will continue as long as we are in the body. But because the Apostle Paul was filled with the Spirit and his eyes were open, he saw sins that he was disgusted by, we do not see them, so he said of sinners of whom I am chief. The matter simply is that there are degrees for believers. The more a person repents and walks in the light, the less his sins and the more grace increases within him, but there must be sins no matter how small, and these determine the amount of joy and peace that the believer enjoys, and the believer moans longing for salvation from this body to get rid of the lusts of sins present and thus obtain complete joy and therefore the Apostle says "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24) And with the same concept in the letter to the Philippians he says, "having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." (Philippians 1:23). And this is much better because the joy will be complete, and man will be completely liberated from the lusts of sin, so was Paul also in the letter to the Philippians expressing his state before grace?! And Saint John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... we make Him a liar" (1 John 1:8-10).

The state before repentance or before faith

The most misery a person can reach on earth



The greatest joy that saints can achieve on earth

Peace and joy are incomplete because of the flesh

The glorified body in heaven... complete peace and complete joy because there is no sin in seeing God and being with the angels. The believer gets rid of all the desires of sin



So the spiritually backward person falls a lot, rarely triumphs, is a sensual person, and rarely tastes joy. As for the spiritually advanced person, his fall is less and his victory is more, and he becomes a spiritual man, that is, submissive to the Holy Spirit, filled with grace, his sins are of the simple type but because of them he is deprived of complete joy. The spiritual person is disturbed by any sin and any evil, even a semblance of evil, and constantly groans because of its existence within him. And review John's saying "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). So was John, when he said this, expressing a state before grace. There must be sins, but people are in degrees. The more a person grows spiritually, the more his old man diminishes, and the new man grows, and the opposite is true. The more the new man grows, the more this person becomes a spiritual person, that is, highly submissive to the Holy Spirit.

The law of sin is ingrained in our human nature, it always stands as an obstacle to contemplating that righteousness that captivates the eyes of the saints, and it hinders us from seeing God. And let us remember that God taught us to pray saying "Our Father who art in heaven... and forgive us our sins...". Even the saints pray this, so who claims that he is not guilty and without the law of sin. And in the liturgy we say, "given for the remission of sins", so has a person reached that he does not need to partake because he is without sin. And let's see the weeping of Saint Anthony and his deep sorrow, he woke up after sunrise and was late for prayer, and considered this a sin. Therefore, people are in degrees.

**Verse (14): "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."**

**"For we know"** = So what is coming is related to the previous verse, which said that sin caused death, not the law. **"The Law is spiritual"** = it means it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. If a person obeyed it, he would become spiritual and would walk in a virtuous spiritual life.

**"But I am carnal"** = meaning made of dust, and sin dwells in me, the old man enslaves my members. **"Sold under sin"** = the old man enslaves my members, so I am born in sin, this state is not only before Christ, but also before repentance. In it, man is enslaved to a master who is sin, and the lusts of his flesh. Sin owns him as a master owns his slave whom he has bought = **sold**. And the master uses his bought slave and orders him, leads him as he wants. So, the sin is from me and not from the law. I pursued human carnal lusts and became enslaved to sin, so I became falling under its law and was considered carnal. This man is only moved by the lusts of his flesh (hatred / envy / money / possession / sex ...).

**"The law is spiritual"** = that is, by inspiration from the Holy Spirit and it leads man in the spiritual direction, but it only condemns and reveals internal corruption, orders without assistance. As for grace, the Holy Spirit dwells in us to help our weaknesses, so the law condemns, but grace assists.

**What did the law of sin do in me?**

1. **It distorted my understanding:** - Verse 15 shows the distortion of the distinction between good and evil due to the frequent fall and habituation to it, so adultery is called love and bribery is called a gift, this is a state of spiritual blindness. Man has become bereft of thought, he has become like someone who does not know, unable to refrain from sin and do good instead of evil.
2. **It deprived me of the good active will:** - Verse 15 "But what I hate, that I do" has first distorted the insight, and took control of the will, so my bodily lust is what drives me. And note that his saying "But what I hate, that I do" means I am not forced and therefore I will be held

accountable for my action as I am not forced.

### **3. It corrupted my body: -.**

In 1. We saw the law of sin distorts spiritual knowledge.

And in 2. We saw it destroys the strong will.

And here we see in verse 17 it gives dwelling to sin in man, inside him, and its law becomes operative in his members, so the members became instruments of sin working on its behalf.

### **And what about the covenant of grace?**

1. Baptism is enlightenment (we read the Gospel of the Blind Man on the Sunday of Baptism. In general, the Holy Spirit opens the senses and trains them (Hebrews 5:14). Generally, the spiritual senses open up to heaven, so the pure in heart see God and distinguish His voice (Matthew 5:8 + John 10:4).

2. God helps the weak will :- For the Holy Spirit assists (Romans 8:26). And God is the one working in us to will and to do (Philippians 2:13). But it's a reinforcement, not a compulsion.

3. We have become temples of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.. This is the new creation.

### **Verse (15): "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do."**

As we said, this is a case of spiritual blindness, as one says, "I don't know why I'm doing this." He is completely enslaved to his pleasure. He knows that this is wrong, but it is as if he does not know, there is an internal drive that pushes him to sin, like those who were brought to Christ, and he had a demon that threw him into the fire and into the water. Sin made him like a madman.

**"I do not understand"** = it's not a theoretical knowledge, for man knows sin by the law of nature, but he means "I have become like someone without knowledge" unable to abstain from sin, like a drunkard who drinks alcohol while knowing its harm, as the poet said "heal me with what was the disease". I do what I do in blindness, and I am drunk with the desires of sin. So, I don't do what I want from the depths of my heart, but I do what I hate because I am under the darkness of sin (this is the condition of the addict, or someone who knows that cigarettes will kill him and still smokes). So, who is it that does in me what I do not want. The soul hates what I am doing and does not want it, and this testifies to the law that it is good. Therefore, it is the sin dwelling in me, which forms a separate self in man, another man who causes a war, and enslaves my members, and the supporters of this man are the false desires, it is the spirit of desire that if it strays from what it is prepared for, it creates a war on man and entices his senses.

As for those who are spiritually advanced, this verse explains thoughts, not actions, for thoughts are involuntary (2 Corinthians 5:10). And this is exactly what David complained about (Psalms 19:12,13). And we note that we cannot prevent a thought from coming to us from outside to our minds, but we are able to abstain from obeying or practicing it. The carnal person, when he begins his transformation to become a spiritual person, first falls in the practice of some wrong actions, then refrains from actions and some desires remain, then it is limited to some thoughts.

### **Verse (16): "If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good."**

**"What I will not to do"** = means what the natural law (my mind and my conscience) testifies to me about its corruption. So, if I feel dissatisfied and uncomfortable with the sin that I commit,

then I agree with the commandments of the law. And there's a question.. If my mind agrees with the law, why do I do the opposite of what my mind says and testifies to? The reason is that the old man did not completely die, or I have affected him and made him wake up and I have neglected to feed the new man with the word of God.

**Verse (17): "But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."**

The sin that dwells in me is like an absolute dictator, it is the one that does what I do and obliges me to it. So, what I do is not due to my will and mind, but from the origin of the desire embedded in me which deviated, and I inherited it from Adam. But God is able to support my will (Philippians 2:13).

**Verse (18): "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find."**

That is, I know that there is nothing good inside me. After I became under the control and authority of my old man, which is easily attracted to sin. And there is nothing good in me because on the one hand, my will to do good and to act virtuously, this will is under my control and within my power. But doing righteousness and doing good and virtue is something that is not within my reach. Here we see that the Apostle distinguishes between will and action, for will corresponds to desire and choice.

And from the work of grace in Christianity \* strengthening the will and also \* God is the one who works in us "God is the one who works in you both to will and to do..." In fact, God uses our members as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13).

And we see an example of this in Apostle Paul himself: He has his own will and conviction to travel and preach, but he suffers from the presence of sin that troubles him. But he also discovers that there is a mighty grace at work in him, and let's look at the effectiveness of Apostle Paul's service "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10). The grace of God working in him worked in him so powerfully that he preached in a wide area of Europe, bearing severe pain despite his physical exertion. And all this in spite of the desires of sin that attract him. But the grace of God that is with him is:

1. It supports him in his service with mighty power. And the Lord Jesus says, "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). And Apostle Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).
2. It suppresses the sin inside him and significantly weakens its authority.
3. And this happens to everyone, but as grace increases, sin shrinks (Romans 8:3). But it will remain present (1 John 1:8-10).
4. Therefore, what moves the outward man (human members) is the will, and this is supported by the work of grace, but we also find that the old man has his role and influence in leading the outer man. And this influence of the old man - however weak its influence may be - we find it weakens the state of joy. Therefore, we find that Saint Paul the Apostle desired to get rid of this old man. And there is no way for this except to get rid of the whole body, so he said "O Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" to enjoy the full state of

joy (Romans 7:24). And he also says, "having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." (Philippians 1:23).

**Verse (19): "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice."**

The problem with being unable to implement the righteous desire and do the righteous will is in the sin that dwells in me and not in my body, for my body which God created is a good body, but the wrong desire dwelt in it, and it became inclined to do evil, and weakened its will to do good. And when Christ came, He gave us grace, which is a power that condemns sin, and He dwells in me, inside me, so I say "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). So if we have already surrendered our depths to sin, let's consider ourselves dead, let's die with the conqueror of sin so that He may possess us and we hide in Him (Colossians 3:3,4).

**Verse (20): "Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."**

Let us know that as long as a man is in the body, in the time of struggle, he will not be immune from error, but he must continue in his struggle so that God helps him in his weakness until he completes his days of pilgrimage in peace.

**Verse (21): "I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good."**

"**I find then a law**" = The law here is the law of my life, or my life system. As a result of sin dwelling in me, I find in myself that wants to do good. I find that there is a law within me that makes evil closer to me than good. At least there will be wrong thoughts inside despite not implementing them. Example: When Paul was struck, he said to the high priest, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall" (Acts 23:3). So inside him was the will not to curse, but he found the curse had come out. As for the perfect Christ, he did not do this. Let's see Paul the Apostle's opinion and his mental conviction which express his will "Repay no one evil for evil" (Romans 12:17), but we find the act different for he cursed the high priest. This act (the curse) is different from the conviction and will of Apostle Paul, but this act resulted from the remnants of the old man inside Apostle Paul, and this is what Paul the Apostle called "the sin that dwells in me ... that is, in my body" (Romans 7:17-18).

**Verse (22): "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."**

It is clear that despite the power of evil, my mind and heart, which represent the inner man feels joy in what God's law recommends, even though the law of sin demands the opposite. The inner man for Paul and for any repentant believer is the new man born of baptism (2 Corinthians 4:16 + Ephesians 3:16). He is the man led by the Holy Spirit and connected to God.

**Verse (23): "But I see another 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."**

Indeed, I feel that there is another law and another power that control and dominate my members, this power, and this law are the law of sin and its power. This law stands in opposition and resistance to everything that my mind, heart, and conscience are convinced of as a righteous law.

**"The law of my mind"** = It is my conscience (there's still a glimmer of light in every human's conscience). Notice the sailors' delicacy with Jonah, and we see in them a picture of the conscience that God placed in the whole world. It is a law because if we ask any person in the whole world for commandments to govern his society, the law of sin operating in him (his desires) may make him enact a law that permits adultery, but his mind would say no lest this happens with his wife or daughter... So, we find him enacting a law that says, "do not commit adultery", and thus he agrees with the Ten Commandments. Therefore, the mind undoubtedly controls the excesses of desire.

**Verse (24): "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"**

This verse means that the Apostle wants to be freed from this current body, which is subject to the law of sin, to obtain the glorified body, and to live in complete freedom, righteousness, joy, and glory. He finds that this body hinders him from all this and from seeing heaven with its joys. So, he groans and longs to obtain this glorified body and the only way is the death of this current body (1 Corinthians 15:42-43). This verse corresponds to the verse "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better". Therefore, this verse **"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** was said by Paul while in the era of grace, no man, no matter who, could desire death before the era of grace. The same meaning is found in Romans 8:23, that he groans, anticipating adoption, that is, he longs to leave his current body, to wear the glorified one, to live in the company of the saints and to see God.

**Verse (25): "I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."**

I give thanks to God who saved me through Jesus Christ our Lord. He gives thanks amidst his complaints, as thanksgiving and praise fill a person with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-21), and therefore they give pleasure and treatment against fears and sorrows. Here we see two laws working in Paul. Note that the word law means a law that applies to everyone:

**The law of his mind** (what he is intellectually convinced of), and **the law of sin** (the inner sin enslaves his members). So, we see that by divine grace his life has been sanctified. But sin still fights him because he is still in the body. **"I myself serve the law of God with my mind"** = He struggles to obey God's commandments and he is convinced of the righteousness of these commandments, and he struggles in his preaching to glorify the name of God. This is the concept of divine victory, as victory is linked to the unending struggle against the sin that dwells within us (Hebrews 12:4). During this struggle, the Lord who dwells within us supports us and whoever

overcomes will receive his rewards (Revelation 2, 3) according to his struggle. So, Paul himself was suppressing his body and enslaving it (1 Corinthians 9:27), and how much he suffered in the service of preaching, humiliating his body in many fasts despite the thorn of his body that he was suffering from (2 Corinthians 11:23-30 + 2 Corinthians 12:7). Note that God did not create a holy man and an evil man, even his apostle Paul says that there are sinful desires that attract him and distract him from heavenly matters to be preoccupied with his mind in earthly things. He rejoices in God with the law of his mind and always strives to be united with Him alone, and says that this law of sin could not prevent his joy in the law of God. "**But with the flesh the law of sin**" = But the joy is not complete as the law of sin that exists in our members strongly attracts us to commit sin, preventing us from complete joy, and this is the secret of the saints' desire to take off.

Note that the Apostle here is giving thanks for spiritual things, that he serves the law of God with his mind, because his eye is open, so he gives thanks for spiritual things (the glory prepared for us and adoption... ). As for those with closed eyes, they give thanks for material things, and what opened the Apostle's eye? That he is steadfast and united with Christ= **I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord**. As humans, our vision is limited and only perceives materiality, so you find a person among us thanking God for His material gifts. But here the Apostle, because he is steadfast in Christ, is full of the Spirit, and whoever is full of the Spirit, his inner eyes open and he realizes God's spiritual gifts. Then, words may fail to express thanks for what we have received. Here the Apostle thanks God who helped him, so he became His servant with intellectual conviction despite the wars of the body. And God is the one who also gives this intellectual conviction "O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded." (Jeremiah 20:7). Therefore, the Apostle here is thankful that 1) God gave him intellectual conviction. 2) And He gave him the strength to serve Him, despite the wars of sin dwelling in his body.

# Chapter Eight

**Introduction:** - Refer to the introduction of Chapter 6 to see that we now have two people inside us: **the first:** - we were born with it from our physical parents, and it tends to sensual pleasures and evil. Prophet David said about it "In sin, my mother gave birth to me" and Apostle Paul said about it "The sin that dwells in me .. nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Rom 7). And Apostle Paul called it the old man and also calls it the body in these verses. And by the body, he does not mean the external body, i.e., the external members like the hand and the foot, but the corrupt lust inside that leads the external members to do evil.

The second: is the one who was born in baptism from water and the Spirit. Apostle Paul calls him the new man, and he also calls him the spirit in these verses. For the Holy Spirit is the one who leads him, and if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead our inner man and do not resist the Holy Spirit, we will live in a heavenly life full of joy and peace.

\*We have the freedom to nurture one and kill the other. And grace helps us to do so. Whichever of them is strong, we find it leading the external members to either do evil or to do good. So, our external members are tools for doing righteousness if led by the new man, or for doing sin if led by the old man.

\*The old man grows by living in evil and arousing lusts, and Apostle Paul refers to him here as **those who walk according to the flesh**. And the new man grows by avoiding evil and clinging to God in prayer, studying the Bible and praises, and Apostle Paul refers to him here as those **who walk according to the spirit**.

\*The old man, with his lusts, if we do not work on killing him, leads us, even throws us far away from God, and consequently leads us to death because it is a separation from God "**the interest of the flesh is death**" (verse 6). And the new man, if we work to make him grow, the spirit leads him to cling to God and therefore we live forever. Let's ask ourselves, what is our concern? Which of them are we interested in developing.

When the old man was alone inside us before Christ, there was no hope for salvation and life, because all the concern of the old man is the lusts of the world which separates us from God. Therefore, Christ came and offered us redemption and sent us the Holy Spirit, which supported us with the grace that assists us and works to kill the old man, this is for those who want to practice a life of mortification after their baptism (2 Cor 4: 10-11 + Rom 6: 11+ Col 3: 5 + Rom 8: 13).

There is an inner struggle between the new man and the old man, and the stronger one is the one that leads the external members of the person. The person is free to choose, by their will, to nurture one and pronounce judgment of death on the other (refer to the introduction of chapter 6). Saint Paul the Apostle summarized this struggle by saying, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another" (Galatians 5:17). We see a depiction of this in the upcoming verses (1-10):-

**In verse 1:** We find that the one who nurtures the seed of life that was born in him through baptism and judges the old man with a life of mortification, there is no condemnation for him.

**In verse 3:** When the old man was alone inside us before Christ, there was no hope for salvation and life. The care of this old man is the lusts of the world. Therefore, Christ came and offered us redemption and sent us the Holy Spirit, who supported us with the grace that assists us and works to kill the old man. This is for those who want to practice a life of mortification after their

baptism (2 Corinthians 4:10-11 + Romans 6:11 + Colossians 3:5 + Romans 8:13).

**In verse 4:** Who is able to live in righteousness? It is the one who lives a life of mortification, who pronounces judgment of death upon their old self. And also, they walk according to the Spirit, meaning they work towards the growth of the new man.

**In verse 8:** We find that those who walk in the flesh cannot please God. Why is that? Our God is a jealous God, and the soul is His bride. If the soul is drawn to the love of another, meaning the world, forsaking her bridegroom and Savior, God will be displeased, for He knows the end of this love for the world—that the soul, His beloved bride, whom He loved and redeemed with His blood, will be destroyed.

**In verse 9:** How do we know if we are in the flesh or in the Spirit? The answer is... Do we clothe ourselves with Christ, meaning do we bear the likeness of Christ, or do we bear the likeness of the world?

**Verse (1): "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."**

"Therefore" refers to the new state in Christ after baptism. We saw in chapter 7 a bitter struggle between the spirit and the flesh. And we saw in 5:1 that walking in the Spirit brings peace, and in 8:6, the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Here, we see that the Apostle Paul declares the power of the Holy Spirit working in a person to deliver them from the bondage of sin and grant them victory, thus experiencing this peace. "There is therefore now no condemnation" means that as we have died to the law (7:4), the condemnation is over. We can conclude that there is no longer any form of condemnation for those who have united with Christ and remain steadfast in Him. "**Who are in Christ Jesus**" refers to those who are steadfast in Christ. This person has died with Christ and been buried, thus the judgment of the law has been fulfilled in them. They have been raised to eternal life in Christ, and the law no longer has the power to condemn them to death again, for eternal life cannot die. The Father does not see their sin but sees the blood of His Son, Jesus, covering this person, and this is the atoning intercession of Christ. Therefore, the Lord asks us and says, "Abide in me."

"**Who do not walk according to the flesh**" means that these are the ones who do not follow the desires of the flesh, who are not submissive to the old man without thinking of repentance. The power of Christ's sacrifice does not work in those who surrender again to sinful carnal desires, awakening the old man within them.

Despite the fact that I am still in my physical body and sold under sin, meaning that the law of sin still operates within me, and this means that I am susceptible to falling, yet the law of freedom also operates within me and provides assistance. It is a counterforce to the law of sin. With the believer's struggle, the law of sin diminishes and joy and peace increase. In this state, the believer longs for the complete joy in heaven, where the law of sin completely disappears, the old man dies completely, and we obtain complete adoption. This is what the Apostle calls "eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23), and this can only happen in heaven. However, as long as we are still in our earthly bodies, we are susceptible to falling. But the one who walks in the light quickly rises from their sin, repenting. The one who is constantly prepared for repentance is the one who walks in the Spirit because they respond to the Spirit who convicts of sin (John 16:8) and responds to the persuasion of the Spirit that leads to repentance, saying, "Restore me, and I will return, for You are the Lord my God" (Jeremiah



31:18).

**"But according to the Spirit"** means those who adhere to the commandments and requirements of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit convicts them of sin, they offer quick repentance. Christ taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins." Therefore, even saints have sins and transgressions. When the Spirit moves them to pray and praise, they do not hesitate. This person who walks in the Spirit is characterized by growth in the Spirit. The power of grace increases and grows within them, making it easier for them to forsake grave sins. With continued growth, it becomes easier for them to forsake lesser sins and so on. They may fall into small sins, but they quickly repent from them. Their obedience to the Holy Spirit is evident, as they love prayer, the Scriptures, and praise. Let us know that the grace of Christ liberates all saints day by day, for those who submit and surrender their lives to the Holy Spirit. But we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling, always humbling ourselves by placing our sins before us. We do not fear that God will abandon us, but we fear our own weakness. The old man within us can explode at any moment if we neglect the struggle and follow our desires.

Please review the interpretation of the verses Ephesians 1:4 and Colossians 1:28. Who is firm in Christ is considered complete without blame and without condemnation.

**Verse (2): "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."**

**"For"** is a response to the question **"Why no condemnation?"** in the previous verse. The phrase **"the law of the Spirit of life"** (review the introduction). The word **law** refers to a law without any exceptions, similar to the law of gravity, where any object left unsupported will fall to the ground. This applies anywhere in the world. Similarly, the law of sin operates universally, so if someone is insulted, feelings of anger, hatred, bitterness, and revenge will ignite within them. Returning to the law of gravity, even to prevent an object from falling, it needs something to support it. Likewise, spiritually, the law of the Spirit of life, which God has established as another law, works against the law of sin and death. The law of Moses has no power to support or sustain us; it only exposes sin without providing a remedy. On the other hand, the law of the Spirit reveals the victorious Christ who shines upon us with divine possibilities that work in those who believe and overcome within us. This is not achieved by force, but by the persuading Spirit (Jeremiah 20:7). The Spirit dwells within us, opening our senses, strengthening our will, convicting us of our sins, and providing us with assistance (Romans 8:26).

Therefore, this power supports the believer so that they do not fall. It is the power of grace that increases through striving. This is the law of the New Testament, that we are "supported but not fastened" the grace supports us (Eph2:8) but doesn't force us to abide in Jesus. We are free to leave whenever we want. Please go to the explanation of (Ezk41:6 & John16:8). The five wise virgins filled their lamps with oil (grace), and the responsibility of filling them lies with every believer, to strive in order to be filled. This book presents to us the power of holy life possibilities in the Lord, and we enjoy the righteousness of Christ, who triumphs over the law of sin. The law of the Spirit of life enables the believer to walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. Thus, a person is considered a spiritual being, accounting for their entire being (body, soul, and spirit).

**"The law of the Spirit of life"** refers to a **law**, meaning a principle or rule. Anyone who relies on it receives this power. This power increases through being filled with the Spirit (our striving).

**"Spirit"** refers to this power that originates from the Holy Spirit dwelling within us through the sacrament of chrismation. **"Life"** refers to the life given to our soul, body, and spirit. It is a life of righteousness instead of the death of sin, a life of sonship instead of the slavery of sin. In Christ, we have received forgiveness of sins, a new creation, and a new nature capable of producing righteousness. The Holy Spirit revives and gives life to both our soul and body when we are united with Christ. This power has set us free from the law of sin, from its power and attraction, and from death. Therefore, the law of the Spirit is enjoying the gift of the Spirit. It breaks the tyranny of sin within us and supports us in our struggle against it.

What Moses was unable to do (crossing the Jordan), Joshua accomplished. Similarly, what the law was unable to do, Jesus Christ accomplished. What is the difference between the law of Moses, which the Apostle calls spiritual (Romans 14:7), and the law of the Spirit of life? The former was given by the Holy Spirit to judge (to restrain sin in the midst of God's people and discipline until the coming of Christ), while the latter bestowed the Holy Spirit upon those who receive it without limits. Therefore, it is called the law of life. It liberates, revives, justifies, assists, and gives power to the believer to walk in the Spirit and struggle against sin. It gives strength to do good and supports the human will so that the believer is not subject to condemnation and judgment.

"Has made me free" means that it has given me the power to overcome the law of sin and death, freeing me from my bondage to sin, which inevitably leads to death.

**Verse (3): "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh"**

**"For what the law could not do"** - The law was intended to enable people to live righteously, but it could not accomplish this, not because of a flaw in the law, but due to human weakness and the power of sin dwelling in their bodies - **"in that it was weak through the flesh."** No one was able to abide by and fulfill the law except for the Lord Jesus alone (thus, anyone who is established in Christ has the ability to carry out all the commandments of the law). The reason for human weakness was that sin inhabited them and enslaved their members. As for the law of the Spirit of life, it has freed me from what the law of Moses was unable to do, because the law of Moses did not give the Holy Spirit to anyone (as Christ had not yet completed the redemption). The Holy Spirit is the one who can overcome and triumph over the concerns of the flesh, as it aids our weaknesses (verse 26). "So, God sent His Son" - When the law failed to justify people, God sent his Son to accomplish the redemption, then sent the Holy Spirit to grant the grace by which we are justified.

**"In the likeness of sinful flesh"** - that is, a complete body like ours, but note the precision of the Apostle Paul. He did not say in the likeness of human flesh, because He (Christ) was completely human, but without sin. The bronze serpent is an example of this; it resembles the real serpent but without the deadly venom. Just as the bronze serpent was able to heal, so Christ was able to justify believers. Thus, we pray in the Gregorian Liturgy, "He resembled us in everything except sin alone".

**"Condemned sin"** - The original Greek word for **"condemned"** means to strangle unto death or to suppress something. This is done by the work of grace, i.e., the assistance of the Holy Spirit for those who want to mortify their desires. This is the meaning of "the Spirit also helps in our

weaknesses" (Romans 8:26). Analogy: The presence of a clot in an artery leading to suffocation in it, prevents blood from reaching the heart, leading to human weakness or death. This is the work of grace; it constricts sin, leading to the weakening or death of the old man as the growth of grace increases with increasing struggle, unless we return and awaken it by our will.

**"He condemned sin in the flesh"** - Christ carried all human sins in His body, and died in His body to judge sin, kill it, and condemn it. This is explained in the Coptic rites by using leavened dough to prepare the lamb. The leaven refers to sin, but when it enters the oven, the leaven dies. In the same way, the Lord Christ used leavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist on Covenant Thursday.

Therefore, Christ died and killed sin in Him. To the extent of my struggle to remain in Christ, I feel the death of sin, its decline, and its domination over my body. Christ took our human flesh to carry our sins and kill them and asks us to remain in Him to kill the sins within us. The more a person struggles to kill sin, the more he becomes established in Christ, and grace helps him in this. That's why the Apostle asks, saying "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin" (Romans 6:11). In this way, a person is healed.

The more sin is dead in me, it's a sign that I am filled with grace and my struggle is accepted. The more sin is rampant in me, it's a sign that I need a lot of struggles to be filled with grace. And if sin is dead within me, then there is no condemnation for me (verse 1).

**"On account of sin"** - God sent Christ to break the sting of sin in me. The death of sin in the baptized person, this cannot be achieved by the law, but this is the work of grace. This strangling power (condemned) was not available with the law, so the law used punishments such as stoning and cutting off from the community... etc, to scare the wrongdoer. Thus, the Apostle Paul said, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ...after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." (Galatians 3:24-25). But with this power capable of strangling the strangling lust unto death, the believer refrains freely, not only refrains but hates the sin.

**Verse (4): "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."**

**"that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us"** - The righteousness of the law according to the Jesuit translation and the English translation. The law's purpose was to justify humans, and when it failed, God sent His Son to condemn sin, i.e., to kill it in the believer, thus justifying him. This fulfills what the law intended: that we should not do evil but do good. This is what we can now do through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

And if we understood the word according to other translations which translate it as "judgment," this also happened, for the law condemns the wrongdoer to death, and we died with Christ in baptism.

**Verse (5): "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."**

In this passage, the Apostle is not comparing the body as members with the spirit. Rather, he is contrasting between an old person who leads the members and a new person born through baptism who is led by the Holy Spirit. The first is referred to as "those who live according to the

flesh" (those who awaken their old man and neglect their struggle, causing their new man to shrink). The second is referred to as "those who live according to the Spirit" (this person struggles and responds to the Holy Spirit). The first has become as if they have a body without the spirit, walking according to the desires of their flesh, becoming carnally minded. The second group has become like a spirit without a body. The concerns of the flesh are pleasures, honor, and desires. The concerns of the spirit are pleasing God, contemplating spiritual things, serving for the glory of God, and focusing on eternity.

**Verse (6): "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."**

"For" - This refers back to verse 3, indicating that God sent His Son to condemn the sin within us. Due to God's love for humanity, He found that they were powerless against the dominion of sin in their bodies and were enslaved to the desires of the flesh (verse 5), resulting in their spiritual death, that is the meaning of **to be carnally minded is death**. So, He sent His Son, who through His sacrifice and the work of the Holy Spirit (grace), diminishes sin in our members, thus fulfilling the purpose of the law in us, which is to walk in righteousness (verse 4). We were previously walking according to our fleshly desires because of the sin dwelling in us before Christ. But Christ sent the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual concerns instead of sin (verse 5), and the result is that **to be spiritually minded is life and peace**.

**"To be carnally minded"** refers to seeking to satisfy one's desires, pleasures, and indulgences. This can also apply to someone who is solely focused on their work and has no time for God. Such a person becomes disconnected from God and experiences spiritual death (**to be carnally minded is death**). It is worth noting that this person only cares about what is temporary, as everything pertaining to the body will eventually perish. If a person allows their desires to control them, their soul and then their body will die (1 Timothy 6:5), and they will lose their eternity. **"But to be spiritually minded is life and peace"** refers to someone who seeks to please God and works for the sake of their eternal life. They find joy in prayer and fasting, and the Holy Spirit fills them with joy and peace, making them spiritually alive in the presence of God. They experience the surpassing peace of God that surpasses all understanding and receive eternal life. By their devotion, they remain steadfast in Christ, and the evidence is that the Spirit pours out peace upon them (Romans 5:1).

**Verse (7): "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."**

**"the carnal mind is enmity against God"** - The body itself is not an enemy of God, as God created it and found it to be very good. However, the focus here is on the old man, where the carnal mind refers to the nourishment of the old man by indulging in its desires and neglecting the nourishment of the new man, which feeds on the Word of God. The true enemy of God is this world and its ruler (Satan). If the body aligns itself with the world, it becomes an enemy of God by association. God created me in this world to use it and not forget my obedience to God, so that I may continue to worship Him. However, if the world becomes the ultimate goal, whether it be the pursuit of desires and gratification or the idolization of wealth and possessions, those who

follow these idols become instruments in the hands of Satan, dishonoring God and transgressing His commandments, thereby entering into enmity with God. That is why we hear that "friendship with the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). Therefore, it is said in verse 6 that "to be carnally minded is death" because it is considered enmity against God. Those who engage in such behavior have turned to worship another god besides God, be it money or their own desires. By doing so, they separate themselves from God, who is the source of life, and condemn themselves to death.

Indeed, this does not mean that we should refrain from eating, drinking, or working. Rather, it means that we should give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. The important thing is to ensure that there is a portion for the spirit. The carnal mind, which is in enmity with God, tends to neglect spiritual matters due to its preoccupation with worldly concerns. On the other hand, the spiritual person may choose to fast, not because there is anything inherently wrong with food, but rather to exert self-discipline and deny oneself of what they desire in order to grow in the spirit. This is why God commanded humans to work for six days and dedicate one day to Him. Therefore, the goal is to maintain a balance and not neglect one aspect while focusing solely on others. When the Thessalonians claimed that they were focused on spiritual matters and neglected their work, it angered the Apostle Paul, who responded by saying, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

**Example:** Why is Jesus considered money to be a God worshipped? It is the duty of a person to work in order to earn a living, provide for their children, and save for the future. However, without anxiety and without placing in their heart the belief that the more money they have, the more secure their future will be, they have confused money as a means to live with it being the ultimate goal to pursue. On the other hand, the spiritual person knows that money can be lost in an instant, and only God alone is the guarantor of the future.

**for it is not subject to the law of God** - This means that the old man cannot submit to the law of God, as their nature is rebellious, seeking to satisfy the desires of the flesh.

**"Nor indeed can be"** - The body, without the Holy Spirit, is impossible to submit to God and His commandments, as it becomes obedient to a harsh master, which is the desires of the flesh. And how do we become filled with the Spirit? This happens by prioritizing the spiritual aspect through prayer, fasting, studying the Scriptures, attending church gatherings, participating in the liturgies, hymns, and psalms. (Luke 11:13; Ephesians 5:17-21)

**Verse (8): "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."**

**"Those who are in the flesh"** - These are individuals who do not possess the new nature, but rather are submissive to their old man, constantly seeking to fulfill the desires of the flesh. Such a mindset extinguishes the work of the Holy Spirit and causes the new man, led by the Spirit, to wither. It awakens the rebellious nature of the old man, which is inherently opposed to God. This kind of person cannot please God because if one is in the flesh, they are not in the Spirit and not rooted in Christ.

**Verse (9): "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."**

They have been baptized and received the Holy Spirit (through chrismation), thus distancing themselves from the current of worldly desires. And those who have forsaken the current of worldly desires become like a spirit without a body. **"But you are in the Spirit"** - These individuals prioritize spiritual matters, igniting the Holy Spirit within them and becoming filled by Him (2 Timothy 1:6). By doing so, they become submissive to the Holy Spirit, who leads them.

However, it is important for every person to ask themselves whether they are extinguishing the Spirit with their worldly concerns or igniting it with their spiritual concerns. The deceit of Satan surrounds us, and it is easy to revert back to the fleshly desires. The one who ignites the Spirit has the Spirit dwelling within them and guiding them. But how do we know if we are in the flesh or in the Spirit? The one who is in the Spirit is filled with the Holy Spirit, and they take on the likeness and actions of Christ. **"If anyone has the Spirit of Christ"** - The goal of the Holy Spirit is to make us put on Christ and to manifest Christ in us (Galatians 4:19; Romans 13:14). If someone possesses the qualities of Christ such as love, kindness, and humility (which is the meaning of the **Spirit of Christ**), then the Spirit of God dwells in them.

**Verse (10): "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."**

**"And if Christ is in you"** - If Christ is united with us and established within us (which, of course, only happens to those who walk in the Spirit and put to death the old man), **"the body is dead"** - This means that the body, the fleshly nature, is rendered lifeless.

[1] The old man, through baptism, dies with Christ and rises with Him, united in His eternal life. And it is worth noting that when Christ arose, eternal life became united with His resurrected body.

[2] Based on the previous point, it is incumbent upon the individual to engage in the works of putting to death the old man, which entails distancing oneself from all worldly desires, idols, and sinful practices, in order to keep the eternal life of Christ steadfast within them.

[3] And God, on His part, works and helps us in humbling the body by allowing some pain, so that the worldly desires do not arise. Just as He allowed Paul to have a thorn in his flesh, "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16) + "For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1). God allows all this pain, Because of the indwelling sin within us, so that the desires of the flesh do not arise.

[4] The body remains in pain, distress, and ultimately, the body dies.

And due to this putting to death of the body and the pains that God allows, in order for the old nature to die, the apostle says, **"the body is dead because of sin."**

However, despite this physical death, the spiritual man lives because he lived in righteousness through the life of Christ that is steadfast within him = justification = and **"the spirit is life because of righteousness."**

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin = Apostle Paul says, "What fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). So, if the life of Christ is in us, this is evidence that the body is dead. It died in baptism first, and we practiced the life of mortification because of sin, meaning we judged ourselves to live as if dead so that sin does not rise within us again and rule over us. And whoever is steadfast in Christ, his wrongful desires will be dead.

Therefore, we hear in the fraction prayer (number 19) in the Khulaji, "Communion affirms us in Christ," "And when the sacrifice is lifted upon your altar, sin fades from our members by your grace." But in order for communion to work within us, we must die to sin. That is, we must make a clear and final decision to stand as if dead before sin.

**"But the spirit is life because of righteousness"** meaning whoever has been baptized and died with Christ, and practiced the life of mortification, will manifest the life of Christ. As the apostle says, ".. that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). Righteousness is produced, and its members become instruments of righteousness. And by the spirit, the apostle refers to the new man who is raised with Christ from the dead and has received life because he walks in righteousness.

And the apostle tells them, "You were manifested to be righteous in your walk." Therefore, the seed, the seed of life that was planted in you through baptism, is alive, and the evidence is your walk in righteousness.

And whoever is alive in the Spirit, when the death of the body comes upon them, they transition from life to eternal life. And it is worth noting that we begin our eternal life here on earth when we have the life of Christ within us.

**Verses 11-17:** The Holy Spirit establishes us in Christ and grants us grace to enable us to put to death the old man and grow in the new man, so that we may have life and walk in righteousness. He is the helper in our journey of life since the day of baptism. He raises us from the death of sin now and ultimately raises us with glorified bodies in heaven. Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, we would walk according to the flesh and perish. But the Spirit empowers those who decide to live the life of mortification (verse 13), granting them life. And everyone who walks according to the Holy Spirit is abided in Christ, the Son of God, and becomes a child of God and an heir to the glory of heaven.

**Verse (11): "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."**

Do you perceive the topic of resurrection as difficult? This is how the devil portrays it to us. Especially the resurrection from the death of sin. The apostle here affirms that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is able to raise you from the death of sin first, and then in the general resurrection, He will raise you with a glorified body. The same idea can be found in Ephesians 1:19, that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is able to work in you to raise you in the first resurrection and the second resurrection = "will also give life to your mortal bodies." That is why we call the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Life.

Summary: What does the law of the Spirit give me?

- 1) The law of the Spirit gives me the spirit of victory and triumph, enabling me to face the battle against sin with strength.
- 2) It sets me free from condemnation, so if I walk according to the Spirit, I will have eternal life.
- 3) We have become children after being slaves. Christ bore our burdens (death, sin, and slavery) and gave us what is His (we became children and beloved). And through this, we have obtained the inheritance.
- 4) We have received the Holy Spirit as our helper.

Therefore, we consider ourselves indebted to the Holy Spirit, not to the flesh, as the apostle teaches.

**Verse (12): "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh."**

We have seen what the Spirit gives us, while the flesh only provides fleeting pleasures followed by sadness, fatigue, and ultimately death. Therefore, due to the greatness of what the Spirit has given us, we are indebted to the Spirit. And those who feel indebted to the Spirit should [1] use their talents to glorify the name of God (talents such as health, wealth, intelligence, etc.), and [2] not let desires dominate us again, but rather submit to the Holy Spirit.

**Verse (13): "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."**

"**If you live according to the flesh, you will die**" means that if you live as slaves to the desires of your bodies, you will experience eternal death (eternal separation from God).

**if by the Spirit**

this is grace work

grace works with who struggle

**you put to death the deeds of the body**

this is my decision & this is my struggling.

to put to death our members Col3:5 & Rom6:11

**Grace:** The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. As for my struggle, it is to stand against sin as much as I can. And this verse perfectly aligns with the Apostle's saying about circumcising the heart with the Spirit (Romans 2:29) and the required struggle:

[1] Negative (We consider ourselves dead to sin).

[2] Positive (prayer, praise, fasting, and mortification).

**And there are two paths for struggle:**

1. With determination and the strength of will, one increases in fasting and prayers every day. However, this type of worship is focused on the body and can resemble Phariseesim (the way that Pharisees worship God). And those who engage in this often seek rewards from God.
2. Worship of the Spirit (referring to Romans 9:1) is to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in quietness, as He calls and convinces us of what we should do. We do not seek rewards but find joy in our actions. However, we must first compel ourselves, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence (Matthew 12:11). Then, we seek the assistance of the Spirit, who begins to convince us. We fast and renounce worldly pleasures because we find delight and comfort in worshipping through the Spirit.

**Verse (14): "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."**

We obtain sonship by our steadfastness in Christ the Son. We are united with the Son in the sacrament of baptism, and we separate ourselves from Him through sin. We return to steadfastness through the sacraments of repentance, confession, and partaking of the body and blood of the Lord, along with all the other mysteries. The Holy Spirit is the one who works in



these mysteries. The Spirit also convicts us when we sin, and those who are led by the Spirit of God, meaning they obey and do not resist Him, remain steadfast in Christ and continue to be sons of God.

**Verse (15): "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father. '"**

**The spirit of bondage** refers to the time under the law. During this time, humans refrained from evil out of fear of the punishment of the law. If they did something good, they sought reward for it. The servant lived in fear, seeking reward, and worked for a meager reward given by his master in return for his work. There are those who live with God in this manner, seeking humble requests from God, such as wealth and health, etc. And if their requests are not fulfilled, they remind God of their deeds, seeking reward for them. The previous verse informed us that those who are led by the Spirit become sons of God. **The Spirit of adoption**, on the other hand, differentiates between a son and a slave. The son works out of love and does not seek a reward from God in exchange for his work, but rather, as a result of sonship. The nature of sonship is such that his requests from his Father are not humble; he seeks the embrace of his heavenly Father and asks for the glory of heaven. In fact, he asks for God Himself, saying, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." In the Old Testament, punishment and reward were temporal. Now, our reward is eternal, as we enjoy God Himself as our everlasting Father. The Holy Spirit testifies within us to this sonship. With this spirit, the spirit of sonship, **we cry out, "Abba, Father."**

**Abba**, in Hebrew, and **pater** in Greek, both mean "**Father**." It is an expression that signifies the unity of Jews and Gentiles. The word "**Abba**" indicates the Jewish sonship to God, while "**pater**" indicates the Gentile sonship to God. Thus, sonship is now available to both, as Jews address God using "**Abba**" and Gentiles address Him using "**pater**"

**The spirit of bondage to fear** refers to two types of fear:

1. Holy and pure fear, exemplified by a student who fears failure, which drives him to exert more effort in studying his lessons.
2. Unhealthy fear, such as someone who enters an exam but fails to answer the questions due to extreme fear, even though they know the answers.

And spiritually: [1] Holy and pure fear, as it is said, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

+ "Do not be haughty but fear" (Romans 11:20). Here we fear God, but not out of terror. Instead, it is the fear of a lover who is afraid of saddening the heart of the beloved. It is a fear that motivates struggle. It is a fear mixed with hope in the inheritance of heaven (it is a hope that grows with the growth of love Romans 5:5), like a student who studies relentlessly to enter a college they dream of. Without this hope, we are the most miserable of all people (1 Corinthians 15:19). And what gives us this hope? Christ's entry into glory with His body as a forerunner on our behalf (Hebrews 6:17-20). We hear about this hope in (verse 20).

[2] Unhealthy fear that turns into doubt and despair in salvation, which is against the virtue of hope. Such fear is said to be cast out by perfect love (1 John 4:18).

**Verse (16): "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"**

The Holy Spirit gives our hearts and spirits the feeling of sonship. This comforting testimony is only given to those who have the nature of sons, that is, those who abide in Christ. The Holy Spirit also gives us the sense that Christ's love surrounds us, enabling us to bear pain. However, to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, one needs a quiet session with the Bible, quiet prayer, and sometimes silence. If you do this in your pain, you will hear the voice of the Spirit saying, "I am with you, so why do you fear... You are a child of God; would God abandon His children? Do not fear and be strong."

**Verse (17): "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."**

We inherit from God because we have become His children, and what do we inherit? We inherit His glory and inherit with Christ, as He made Himself our brother (John 17:22, 24, 26). This is an amazing verse. To inherit from God and with Christ explains what the Apostle said, "whom He has appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). Christ was glorified in His body = this is what it means to become the heir of all things, and this is for our sake, for we are His body (John 17:5, 22). He is the one who said, "Where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3), and also said, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne" (Revelation 3:21). Indeed, we will assume the image of His glory (Philippians 3:21 + 1 John 3:2). These glories cannot be imagined or conceived, for there is "what no eye has seen..." Indeed, anyone whom God opens his eyes to what is prepared in heaven will realize that the world and everything in it is nothing but rubbish (Philippians 3:8). The Jews thought that they alone were the heirs, and Paul, in these verses, affirms that the inheritance is for all the sons who say, "Abba, Father". They thought the inheritance was temporal and earthly, so the Apostle says, but here there are pains.

"**If indeed we suffer with Him**" means Before we dwell on thoughts of glory and inheritance, the Apostle here reminds us that we are still on earth and in the body, and as long as we are in the body, there is definitely pain. But he continues, for those who endure pain with gratitude, that the pain is... "**That we may also be glorified together**" To explain this, let's recall the story of David, who fled from King Saul and was in terrible pain. A few companions who believed in God's promise to David that he would become king, accompanied David throughout his period of pain. When David was glorified, they were glorified with him, becoming leaders and ministers... etc. Thus, those who insist on accompanying Christ during His period of pain on earth, Christ glorifies in heaven. And the inheritance is for those who suffer with Christ and with gratitude. We also add that God allows pain to stop us from sinning (1 Peter 4:1).

**Verse (18): "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."**

The present sufferings are nothing compared to the glories that are prepared for us:

1. No matter how great the pain is, it is very insignificant compared to the prepared glory.
2. The time of sufferings is temporary, while the glories are eternal, without end.
3. The sufferings mentioned here are for the sake of completion, they are the fellowship of

sufferings with Christ, and they are accompanied by consolations (2 Corinthians 1:3-8). In fact, those who have tasted the sufferings along with the consolations even desire to experience the sufferings, which is why the Apostle Paul considered them as a gift (Philippians 1:29). However, we should know that complaining hinders the consolations. This is what made the Lord Jesus say, "Take My yoke upon you" (the sufferings that I allow + the commandments that I have given you), for it is light (Matthew 11:29-30). Notice the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). Whoever accepts to be yoked with Christ, meaning accepting to bear the cross that God allows without complaining, and to follow His commandments, will find that Christ bears his/her burdens and helps him/her fulfill the commandments, making it easy to abide by them. Christ gives joy that no sorrow can overcome (John 16:22), and He gives peace that no problem or confusion can overcome (John 14:27 + 2 Corinthians 4:8 + Philippians 4:7).

4. The more the pain increases, the more the glory increases, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

5. Our sins are unlimited and deserved unlimited punishment i.e., eternal perdition and death, because our sins were towards our unlimited God. So the pain we suffered now as a punishment is nothing when compared with what we deserved actually.

**"The glory which shall be revealed in us"** refers to the future glory that is yet to come. It is the glory that is coming. **"Shall be revealed"** means that the glory we are currently in is invisible, but in eternity, it will become visible. For example, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers as tongues of fire during baptism and chrismation, could anyone see this fire?

Similarly, when we partake of the body and blood united with the divinity, it is present in our midst daily. But can anyone see the united divinity in the body of Christ? Therefore, we are in glory but it is not yet revealed. It will be revealed in eternity. Let's go back to the story of David and Saul. Saul was in visible glory (having an army, servants, people's submission, and apparent power), while David was in weakness but in glory because the Spirit filled David, while the Spirit had departed from Saul. Then, when King Saul died and David came, the glory that was hidden in David was revealed, and David glorified those who were with him.

**Verse (19): "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God."**

The creation refers to the world and everything in it, including inanimate objects. God created the world for the sake of humanity, and He found it very good, a beautiful world. However, when humanity fell into sin, its corruption affected the earth. This is why we hear God's words, "Cursed is the ground because of you... thorns and thistles..." (Genesis 3:17-18). When humanity resisted its Creator, creation resisted humanity. Even the sun was darkened when the Lord of glory was crucified. Devastating floods, destructive desertification, deadly earthquakes, and the brutality of humans (such as Cain and the Roman people with their arenas where slaves were tortured) reflected the corruption of humanity. This corruption even extended to animals, turning them into vicious creatures that prey on each other. The creation became like a mirror reflecting the state of humanity. However, the holiness of saints like St. Barsoum El-Erian affected even the snakes, causing them to lose their venom. Because of St. Paul the hermit, it was said that God caused the Nile waters to overflow. Therefore, Paul the Apostle envisions here that creation

eagerly awaits the revealing of the glory of God's children, so that it may be reflected upon them. In turn, creation will regain its original beauty and splendor.

**"The revealing of the sons of God"** means that when the hidden glory in the children of God is revealed, creation will also be glorified. This will only happen in eternity when humanity returns to the divine embrace.

**Verse (20): "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope"**

Creation has been enslaved to **futility**, which means it has become worthless, like a mirage. No matter how much a person gathers, it is either lost or left behind when the person dies. In contrast to this, we find the word '**truth**'. Christ is the true bread and the true light; He is eternal and gives eternal life. However, this enslavement of creation was done with hope, with the understanding that this situation will end. What happened with the people when they went into Babylonian captivity was a symbol of what happened to creation. God promised the people that they would go into captivity under the slavery of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and this would last for a limited period of 70 years. After that, they would be liberated by Cyrus, king of Persia. Creation and humanity were enslaved in the hands of Satan (with Nebuchadnezzar as a symbol) but for a limited time until the arrival of Christ (Cyrus was a symbol) who would liberate them. However, creation will remain in its current state until the revelation of the glory of the sons of God, which will not happen until the second coming. Just as God issued a command for the people to be enslaved to the King of Babylon, but with the hope of return, God also issued a command for creation to be subjected to **futility** (Satan), with the hope of emancipating humanity and renewing creation (Jeremiah 25:8-12). Both of these commands were due to sin, and anyone who returns to sin becomes enslaved again.

We note that the prophet Solomon emphasized this truth that the world is vanity of vanities. Because of sin, creation lost its image of truth and beauty, but with hope. If the inanimate creation has hope that its image will be renewed, will He abandon me, a human being created in His image?

Refer to (2 Peter 3:10 + Psalm 102:25-26 + Isaiah 51:6 + Revelation 21:1). From all this, we understand that the earth will pass away and the elements will melt with fervent heat. However, this can be understood to mean that just as a person dies before gaining the image of the glorified body, so too will the cursed image of the current world end, in preparation for it to regain its splendor.

**Verse (21): "because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."**

The hope that creation awaits is that it will be freed and liberated from the bondage of vanity and corruption, and will no longer be corrupt. It will have a share in the glorious freedom of the children of God, which means the image of slavery it suffers from will end = freedom. And the state of corruption will end = glory. All of this is for the sake of the children of God. As the Church Fathers said, a father dresses the governess and the house servants in new clothes (a symbol of the new earth) on the day of his son's birth, or on his birthday, or his wedding (the day

we put on the glorified body).

This should not be understood to mean that the earth will return to a paradise where humans live as they did in the days of Adam. This is against the teaching of the Holy Bible (for the kingdom of heaven is not a matter of eating and drinking, Romans 14:17) and there will be no marriage (Matthew 22:30). There will be no hunger or thirst (Revelation 7:16). But the Apostle wants to show the effectiveness of Christ's work, as creation will be renewed and humans will be glorified. So, should we be disturbed by the pains of life when nature itself has hope, and is going to be renewed for your sake, you child of God? But we will not live on earth again, but in heaven. However, God created the earth and heaven, and as long as he created them, he wants them and will not do without them. Instead, they will have a new image. What is important is that the current image of the earth will disappear, and we do not know exactly what will happen, but a new image of creation will be born, and this is the meaning of "groaning and labors with birth pangs" (verse 22). But we will not need the light of the sun, for example, Christ with His light will illuminate for us, and there will be no night (Revelation 22:5).

Because of sin, God hid Himself from humanity and the earth, so the earth became cursed due to human sin, and its splendor, which once was, disappeared. But when humans are glorified, which will happen by the reflection of God's glory on them (1 John 3:2), creation will also take on a glorious image, as God's glory will no longer be hidden from it. The Apostle depicts creation here as yearning and groaning, awaiting the day when humans are glorified, i.e., the day when God's glory appears and is reflected on them, and consequently, it is also reflected on creation.

**Verse (22): "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."**

The Apostle Paul portrays the inanimate creation as if it were a person, and this is something that the prophets in the Old Testament also did. They personified nature as if it had senses through which it expressed the blessings of God in joy and praise or groaned and suffered with God's anger. This is known as poetic imagery. Examples include rivers clapping their hands (Psalm 98:8) and hills leaping and mountains moving. The meaning is that the blessings of God seemingly stir the non-sentient creation to rejoice (Habakkuk 2:11, Job 31:38). However, there are also actual events where God's anger is manifested in nature (such as the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the darkness at the crucifixion). We have seen that nature obeys God, and even obeys His servants. The sea and the wind obeyed Christ (Mark 4:39), and the sun and moon obeyed Joshua (Joshua 10:12-13). Even the beasts were subject to the saints (Daniel) and the hermits dwelled with the wild animals, and the ravens fed some of them. However, this is not a general rule, but God allows it to support faith and to confirm His divine gifts and the anticipated glories. The groaning and laboring of creation is a result of its corruption, which is a reflection of the human sufferings due to their corruption. But from within this corruption, a new image will be born. Therefore, creation is likened to a mother on the verge of giving birth (labor pains refer to the pains of childbirth), and what will be born is the image of the new creation that will be without flaws (earthquakes and volcanoes). When the children of God are in glory, this will also be reflected in creation, as creation acts like a mirror reflecting the state of the children of God. God allowed us to be subjected to vanity so that we groan in the pains of refinement and discipline until we become worthy of the anticipated glory. Just as God delivered the Jews to Nebuchadnezzar for discipline, when they returned, they returned having

completely forsaken idolatry.

**Verse (23): "Not only that, c, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."**

It is not only creation that groans, but we ourselves, even though we have received the firstfruits of the Spirit - sonship, love, joy, peace, etc. However, because of the sin that we still suffer from, because of the corruption of our nature that we have not yet fully rid ourselves of, and because of the corruption of the world around us, we still groan, especially after having tasted the earnest of the Spirit, we have come to desire the perfection of the Spirit's gifts in heaven. When our bodies are fully freed from corruption and we attain the perfection of adoption after our bodies rise from the dead, Christ, through His blood, has secured the salvation of our souls and bodies so that our bodies may share in the glory of the children of God. The phrase "**redemption of our body**" means the resurrection of the bodies from death, and no more death after that. Instead, we will rise with glorified and radiant bodies, in a state of complete adoption (without sin, 1 John 3:9), in complete joy. We will have the image of the glorified body of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:42,53; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

**Verses (24-25): "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."**

**For we were saved in this hope** means that the story of salvation began with the birth and redemption of Christ and will culminate with us receiving the glorified body in heaven. For me, the chapters of the work of salvation begin with baptism and end with me receiving the glorified body. This salvation and complete adoption, and the glorified bodies, are eschatological states that will only be fully realized in the coming age. What we live now in the story of salvation, we live by faith, through which we embark on the path of salvation. Through hope, we begin to taste these blessings and earnest of the Spirit. Hope opens the heart to behold this salvation. But without seeing anything tangible. All we have received is an earnest, such as the diminishing of sin in our bodies, the earnest of sinless life in the glorified body in heaven, the testimony of the Holy Spirit in us through sonship, which is the earnest of complete sonship in heaven. Faith looks to the promise, and hope looks to what is promised. Some people interpret this verse as if we have already been saved, but how? If salvation were already certain, there would be no meaning to hope. Have we ever heard a student in medical school say, "I hope I get accepted into medical school"? And if salvation were already certain, would the Apostle Paul say, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12)? Salvation began, is ongoing, and will be completed. That is why the Apostle Paul uses past, present, and future tenses to express salvation (see the interpretation of Romans 9:5). But when he says "we were saved," it means that Christ accomplished the work of salvation and we have begun, but we must continue the work with fear.

**Hope that is seen is not hope** means that if salvation was already visible and certain, there would be no need for hope. However, with the presence of hope, it gives us joy. There are pains that God allows us to go through in order to be perfected and prepared for heaven. The world is a

place of great tribulation (Revelation 7:14), and we endure with patience because of hope. We endure the pain because our eyes are fixed on what we hope for, and patience itself is a gift from God. Therefore, **we eagerly wait for it with perseverance**, knowing that what we hope for is worth the endurance.

**Verse (26): "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."**

In the previous verse, we saw that God gives us patience to endure the pains of this world while our eyes are fixed on the hope of salvation prepared in heaven. But God not only gives us patience, He also sends us the Holy Spirit to accompany us throughout our journey in this world and until we reach heaven and helps us in our weaknesses.

**How does the Spirit help us overcome our weaknesses:**

1. The Spirit is the Comforter in the midst of our distress, for those who give thanks. But for those who complain, their hearts become hardened, and they deprive themselves of heavenly comforts and blessings.
2. He is the Spirit of counsel (2 Timothy 1:7), whom we need in the midst of the troubles of this world, to provide us with appropriate advice and guidance.
3. He convicts us of sin, prompting us to repent and turn away from it. When we are convinced, He gives us the strength to overcome the weaknesses of our flesh and its desires. He also convicts us of righteousness, urging us to live a righteous life, and when we are convicted, He empowers us to walk in righteousness.
4. He constantly reminds us of the goodness of God, prompting us to give thanks for His blessings, and of the punishment prepared for the wicked, causing us to have a holy fear for our eternal destiny. He also reminds us of all the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and gives us the strength to live them out, such as loving our enemies and refraining from seeking revenge.
5. He gives us strength to face risks and challenges, and He equips us with words to speak before kings and rulers. He also provides us with joy and comfort in times of martyrdom and intense suffering, a joy that overcomes pain.
6. If we become sluggish in our worship of God and lazy in our spiritual pursuits, He energizes and strengthens us, renewing our determination.
7. He gives us what to say in our prayers (Hosea 14:1-2). The Spirit enables us to express our prayers to God or when we ask for things that are not in our best interest or not aligned with God's will. For example, when Paul asked for healing for himself, which is not in his best interest, or if we ask for temporal riches that may draw us away from God, or if we ask for glory like the sons of Zebedee or for fire to consume those who reject Christ, thinking it glorifies God (even though God does not see it as glorifying), or if someone asks for a life of monasticism that is not their path, the role of the Holy Spirit is to convince the believer that what they are asking for is not according to His will - "You induced me, and I was persuaded" (Jeremiah 20:7). However, if we ask for something according to His will, He will respond to us (1 John 5:14). Moreover, the Holy Spirit may convince me of what God wants, so I ask for it, or convince me that my request is not in my best interest, so I let go of it. In any case, whether it is this or that, I will pray from my heart, "Your will be done."

**"The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses"** means that He is like someone who sees a man

carrying a burden and steps forward to assist him. The Spirit will only help those who make an effort and strive in their work. We cannot sit lazily, asking for assistance and expecting the Holy Spirit to do everything for us. Without God, we cannot accomplish anything, and without us, He does not want to do anything. We should also note that He helps us even in the smallest matters, strengthening us and enhancing our weak natural abilities. The word "help" in its Greek origin means "to assist with." Therefore, the Spirit does not help those who do not lift their hands in prayer. The assistance of the Spirit is contingent upon the will, striving, and dedication of the individual in prayer. Those who strive and exert themselves will be assisted by the Spirit, who will grant them delight in prayer.

**"For we do not know what we should pray for"** - Notice that the one in pain prays for his problem to be solved or to be healed from his illness. Verse 25 ended with the idea that we endure amidst the pains of this world, and in verse 26, we saw the Holy Spirit helping us in our weaknesses. Then we hear about prayer in the midst of pain, so how does the Holy Spirit help those who pray? The Spirit guides those who pray through conviction, for example, as happened with the Apostle Paul when he was convinced that healing was not in his best interest, and that healing went against God's will, which is the salvation of Paul's soul. And God's will is always good for us, for He is the giver of blessings. However, we do not know this goodness, and we do not know what we should ask for in our prayers. There are saints who prayed not according to God's will, such as Paul praying to see Rome, Moses desiring to see Palestine, Jeremiah praying for the Jews, Samuel praying for Saul, and Abraham praying for Sodom. Here, we find holy hearts that love others, but they do not know what they are praying for. We may also pray for things that are against our salvation, like Paul praying for the thorn to be taken away (the illness). Well, Jesus said to James and John, "You do not know what you are asking for." The mystery of the future makes us unaware of what we should pray for, and we pray for requests that may cause great harm to us.

The work of the Holy Spirit within us is to guide us in prayer, giving us what to say, and convincing us of God's will or that what we are asking for is not in our best interest, so we surrender to God's will. A person may start their prayer by making a certain request, but as they continue in prayer, the Holy Spirit convinces them to accept God's will, and they say, "Your will be done." When a person surrenders their concerns to God, they become acceptable before Him. Prayer does not change God's will, but it changes my will by the work of the Holy Spirit, aligning my will with God's will. However, in order to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, it is required that we calm ourselves and be silent to listen. We should not speak continuously during prayer, but rather, we should be still and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matthew 21:22). So, if I ask for something wrong or not in my best interest, will God give it to me? No. However, we should not base our understanding on just one verse. Place this verse before you, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14). God will only respond if our prayers are aligned with His will. How do we know His will? This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who convinces me to fully surrender to Him. Through this, I become acceptable to God. This is the intercession of the Holy Spirit. So, when we say that Christ intercedes for us before the Father (1 John 2:1), it does not mean that Christ requests anything from the Father on our behalf. This is an intercession of supplication, and it is the work of the heavenly beings. However, the intercession of Christ is redemptive, meaning that because of our sins, we are not acceptable before the Father, but Christ has covered us with His blood (atonement), making us acceptable before the Father. By the same logic, if my will differs from



the Father's will, I become unacceptable to Him. However, the Holy Spirit convinces me to surrender my will completely to the Father, making me acceptable before Him. Thus, He intercedes for me before the Father. **The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.** The one who groans is not the Spirit, for the Spirit does not groan. Rather, the Spirit instills in us feelings of love, gratitude towards God, and a longing for heaven. He gives us the words to express in prayer. The Spirit does not create eloquence and fluency in our prayers, but rather a yearning for God. The soul may be in pain due to a personal hardship, and the one who has experienced that pain stands to pray, the Spirit enables him to place his complete trust in God, who loves them despite the hardship, and convinces them that the hardship is their path to heaven. Their heart burns with love for God, yet they find no words to express their feelings towards Him, so they groan. God hears these groans, which express the soul's response to the Holy Spirit. God hears these accepted groans (verse 27), just as He heard Moses' cries without him shouting or speaking a word (Exodus 15:14), heard Ishmael's cries in his thirst without him opening his mouth (Genesis 21:17), and heard the groans of Hannah (1 Samuel 1:13). God hears, meaning He knows who responds to the Holy Spirit. In verse 27, we hear, "**According to the will of God.**" The work of the Holy Spirit aligns my will with God's will, so I pray from the heart, saying, "Your will be done." We observe that this is what happened with Christ. During times of trial, I cry out to God for days and months, and the Holy Spirit convinces me throughout this period to surrender my will to God. The more a person progresses spiritually, the shorter this time becomes. With Christ, this time was reduced to almost nothing. Notice Christ's prayer, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." The more I shorten the time between my requests and fully surrendering my will to God, the higher my spiritual stature becomes. A believer starts their prayer insisting on a certain request and ends their prayer completely surrendering the matter into God's hands in trust. They then go forth with a heart filled with peace. The Spirit intercedes for us, meaning He enables us to be acceptable before God, and His blessings are poured into us, including the peace that fills our hearts. The meaning of the Spirit interceding is that He enables us to have a proper connection with God (and this connection is prayer). Oh, if only we could learn to pray in this manner, saying, "Lord, I desire this... but I do not know where the good lies... so let your will be done." How does the Holy Spirit work internally?

- 1- I may start praying in a state of distress about something and ask for a change in it.
- 2- The Spirit speaks within me, and this occurs for those whose senses are trained (Hebrews 5:14), convincing me that what is happening is for my good.
- 3- The enemy of good may argue against me that what is happening to me is a sign of God's harshness in His judgments against me.
- 4-The soul answers screaming inside me, how can God be so harsh on you when He is your father?

And this is the meaning of :-

(A) He gives us the ability to cry out, "Abba, Father" (verse 15).

(B) Like Jesus said, a father does not give snakes or scorpions to his children.

So here, the Spirit speaks within me by placing a thought in my mind, convincing me that God is my Father, and I can find rest and the distress will end.

5- The next stage is that He instills within me feelings towards my Heavenly Father, the One who orchestrates all good for me even in situations that I thought were harmful to me. These feelings are feelings of love that cannot be expressed (and this is the meaning of groaning).

So the Spirit speaks within us through (A) convincing us with thoughts (Jeremiah 20:7).

(B) The feelings towards God (Romans 5:5).

**Verse (27): "Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."**

"**He who searches the hearts**" refers to God, who searches the minds and the hearts (Revelation 2:23) and knows everything in my heart. "**Knows what the mind of the Spirit is**" means that the Holy Spirit is the one who brings conviction, as we previously mentioned, regarding a specific matter. He alone knows whether my heart has been convinced or not. If He finds me still unconvinced, the Spirit continues to try and insist until I am convinced (Jeremiah 20:7). "**He makes intercession according to the will of God**" means that the Holy Spirit works alongside the spiritual person to change their decision in prayer and align their requests with the will of God. This is what intercession means – my prayers do not change God's will, but changing my will to align with His, making me acceptable to God.

"**He makes intercession for the saints**" refers to the work of the Holy Spirit, which does not have an effect on the carnal person who does not listen to the Holy Spirit at all.

**Note:** It is not important to speak a lot in prayer, but rather to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit within us and groan with what He prompts us.

**Verse (28): "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."**

Indeed, as we groan, we also know that for **those who love God**, everything works together and cooperates for their good, for their well-being, for the building up of the true believer's character, and for the salvation of their soul. Even what we perceive as contrary or adverse circumstances, including the painful ones (such as the thorn in the flesh for Paul the Apostle), they all work for the salvation of the believer's soul. This verse is connected to the previous one. So, when the Spirit convinces me in my distress that what is happening in my life is for my good, I respond by saying, "Let Your will be done."

"**We know**" means that these are self-evident truths that do not require proof. It is evident that God is the creator of all good things, and we have experienced this in our lives through God's dealings with us. God cannot do evil to His children. Even what we perceive as evil, God is able to bring sweetness (salvation) out of the bitter (pain) (1 Corinthians 3:22). Evil and pain entered the world because of sin, but God has the power to turn them into good, as expressed by St. Gregory in the liturgy: "You have turned for me the punishment into salvation".

"**Work together**" means that while something alone may seem bad and incomprehensible due to its strangeness and harshness (referring to pain), when it is added to other works and circumstances that have occurred and will occur, all these circumstances work together for one purpose, they work harmoniously for the good. And what is this good? It is the salvation of my soul.

**Scientific contemplation to explain the verse:**

When multiple forces act on a body, the body moves in the direction of the resultant force. This can be calculated using mathematical formulas. Similarly, the believer who loves God is subject

to two sets of forces.

**The first set of forces:-** includes the acts of kindness and blessings from God, both temporal and spiritual.

**The second set of forces:-** includes the resistance of Satan, trials, and hardships, but all of these occur with the permission of God (as seen in the story of Job).

The purpose of God's acts of

kindness is to attract the believer to

Him. When Satan attacks with his trials, his intention is to distance the person from God.

However, God allows these trials to purify the believer.

1. The thorn in Paul's flesh is from Satan, and God allowed it to protect him from pride (2 Corinthians 12:7).

2. The afflictions of Job were from Satan, and God allowed them to heal him from his self-righteousness.

3. The wrongdoer in Corinth, whom Paul judged to be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, but it was for the salvation of the spirit on the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:5).

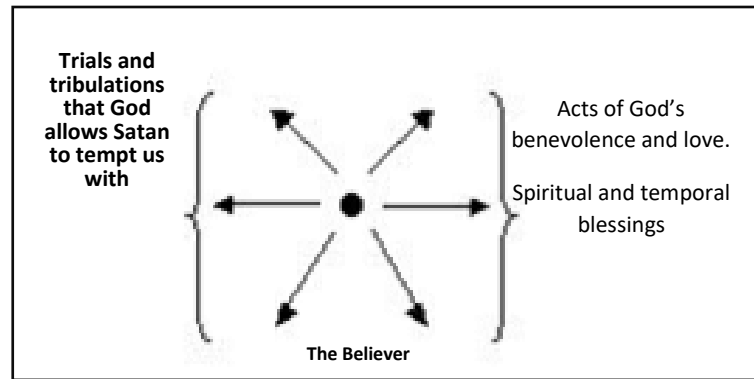
It is important to note that Satan directs his attacks and trials towards the believer in order to make them complain against God. However, in His love, God allows this for the sake of the believer's soul salvation. All the events that take place in my life, whether I perceive them as good or painful (as indicated by the word "**together**"), have the purpose of directing me towards a single outcome, which is the salvation of my soul. This is always for the good of those who love God.

For example, if all of God's gifts were temporal blessings (wealth, health, worldly achievements, etc.), we would become attached to the earthly life and reject the idea of death. And if all of God's gifts were spiritual blessings (delight in prayer, healing abilities, etc.), humans would become prideful, arrogant, and lose their soul salvation.

Therefore, we can say that Satan's goal through the trials that he afflicts believers with is to separate them from God. However, God allows these trials because He alone knows what we need for our salvation, and He alone knows how to protect His children from any deviation that could lead to their destruction. Only God knows the interpretation of the word "**together**" and how to direct both His acts of kindness and trials towards the salvation of the souls of His beloved ones. Therefore, when Satan directs his attacks to separate the believer from God, God scoffs at him and laughs, as this is exactly what God intended (Psalm 1:2-4). Even in times of distress, God does not leave His children alone but gives them comfort to overcome the difficulties in peace. "His left hand is under my head (the distress) and His right hand embraces me (His consolations)" (Song of Songs 8:3). "In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul" (Psalm 94:19).

**"Those who love God":** As for those who do not love God, there is another law that governs them, which is "**cursed is the ground for your sake.**" They suffer and endure pain without any benefit, as a consequence of their sins and the curse on the earth.

What spoils the work of God is complaining about what God allows. This can disrupt divine providence and God may withdraw the trial that was meant for the salvation of the soul and the



building up of the individual. The complainer returns to their own will, and divine care may be removed from them. They lose the path of progression towards achieving the highest divine purpose. Everything we perceive in our lives as negative or harmful either separates us from the world or draws us closer to heaven and prepares us for it. In Ezekiel 10:13, we observe that all the wheels (circumstances that affect our lives and destiny) are as if they are one wheel, meaning they have a unified purpose, harmony, coherence, and cooperation. The ultimate goal for those who love God is the salvation of their souls.

**"Those who are called"**: Those who love God have been called and chosen according to God's fore knowledge.

**"According to His purpose"**: God's purpose, as we see in Romans 8:29, is for believers to be conformed to the image of His Son. If God has called them and this is His purpose, then all things work together for their good and benefit.

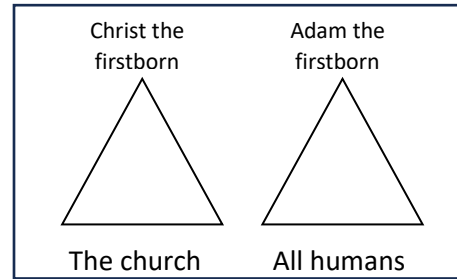
**Verse (29): "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."**

**"Foreknew"**: Therefore, God's choosing and calling are not based on favoritism, but He knows in advance who will accept Him as their Savior and respond to His call. By His perfect knowledge, He knows their worthiness, as it says **"whom He foreknew."** **"And whom He foreknew, He also predestined"**: He predestined them **to be conformed to the image of His Son**, meaning that they would acquire the same spiritual and moral likeness as the Son. Christ became like us in His death so that we may become like Him in His life. We resemble Him in His qualities, holiness, and even the glory of being children of God. So, it is He who calls, justifies, and glorifies, but not in a passive way from our side. God calls everyone (1 Timothy 2:4), but there may be instances where God desires something, but the individual does not, thus not fulfilling God's will, as seen in the words "I wanted... but you were not willing" (Matthew 23:37). So, what do we do to resemble the image of His Son?

Paul the Apostle says in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So, as we change our ways from the pattern of this world, we are transformed to resemble children of God. We resemble Him in accepting pain and the cross, in His holiness, purity, and rejection of sin, so that we resemble Him in His victory over death. Therefore, those who have been chosen are chosen for holiness, meaning to resemble Christ. There is no room for anyone to say, "Since I am chosen, I can sin as I please," for how can one who is in the likeness of Christ sin? (2 Thessalonians 2:13) We have been born in His likeness through baptism, where the old man dies and the new man rises with Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit in us is to shape Christ within us (Galatians 4:19). We are transformed into the image of the suffering Christ on earth to take on the image of His glorious body in heaven (2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 3:10, 1 Corinthians 15:49, Philippians 3:21, 1 John 3:2).

**"To be the firstborn among many brethren":**

[1] Firstborn refers to the only begotten Son, the holy one of the Father, the wisdom and mind of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). He is the source of all things, and without Him, nothing came into being (John 1:3). He is the first and the founder of the entire creation. He is also the head of the new creation, and in Him, we become children of God.



[2] The word "firstborn" can indeed refer to being the first to open the womb of the Virgin Mary, but it does not necessarily imply the existence of other siblings for Him to be the firstborn among.

[3] He is the firstborn of the new creation because He died and rose again, and through baptism, we die and rise with Him. We enter the new creation through Him and in Him (Colossians 1:15). He is the founder and the first of the new creation. He is the one who preceded us in entering heaven in glory; He is the first to enter. He is the firstborn because He is the first as the Son of God, and we are followers of Him, united with Him and conformed to His likeness.

[4] He is the substitute for Adam, the firstborn of the new creation. Christ became the last Adam, and through our union with Him, we have become firstborns. We have become heirs as firstborns (Hebrews 12:23).

[5] He is the substitute for Israel, the firstborn Son of God. The title of firstborn has transferred to Him, as Israel lost its firstborn status due to its sin. Similarly, Israel carried the title of firstborn because the Christ would come from them and He would become the true firstborn and take their place.

**Verse (30): "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."**

**"whom He predestined"**: He appoints them as children conformed to the image of His Son, knowing that they will accept His grace in their free will. As God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5).

**"whom He called"**: through the proclamation of faith, and now this calling is an inner calling, and those who accept it are justified, and those who are justified are glorified.

**Verse (31): "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"**

**"What then shall we say to these things?"** This is a word of amazement. The things of the world, when we come to know them, often cease to amaze us. But the love of God, the more we know it, the more we are filled with wonder. "If God is for us" If God dwells in us through His Holy Spirit, and we are united with Christ, then God supports us, guards us, and protects us. He is on our side. So, who can work against us? Not even the devil can prevail against us. "Who can be against us?" No one can harm us as long as we are under His protection and sanctuary. In fact, if God is with me, even the things that are against me turn in my favor. If the wealth of a believer is taken away, it becomes a means of rewarding them. If someone speaks ill of them, that evil is

considered a new source of glory in the eyes of God. If they are deprived of food, God satisfies them with His consolations. And if they offer themselves for martyrdom, they will receive the crown of eternal life.

**Verse (32): "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"**

Indeed, God, who gave us His only Son and offered Him up for us, how can He not freely give us all things that we need for our salvation? If God has already given us Christ, how can He withhold anything necessary for our redemption? And if God has sacrificed Him for us while we were still enemies, will He now withhold salvation from the repentant? However, Satan still deceives some, just as he did with the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son, who complained that his father did not give him a fatted calf while the entire inheritance was his. Satan continues to portray to us that God does not love us because we may be deprived of material things (wealth, health, position, promotion, etc.), and we start to complain, echoing the complaints that the devil has put in our ears. The Apostle here expresses his amazement at this! Are we going to argue with the One who has given us His Son? Are we going to complain that He did not give us this and that, while He has given us His Son so that we may obtain the inheritance of heaven? Will the One who has given us His Son withhold anything beneficial for us? But let us understand that He gives us everything that prepares us for heaven. As for what distances us from heaven, He will not give it to us, and that is because of His love for us. This faith in the love of God and the understanding that He gives us what enables us to reach heaven will give us victory over pain and tribulation. After experiencing this love, we should accept any cross and even ask to be raised with our own crosses into the loving embrace of the Father. We should not ask for anything else, for in front of this love, and because of our sins, we are ashamed to ask for anything.

**Verse (33): "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."**

The accuser is Satan (Revelation 12:9-10). "**It is God who justifies**" means that He grants His chosen ones His special righteousness, His free gift. When people justify themselves, complaints persist, but when God justifies, everything is completely covered, and all complaints are nullified. God completely forgives all the sins of those whom He justifies.

**Verse (34): "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."**

We are here before a courtroom scene. The accused is myself, the one who condemns (the judge) is Christ. The Father has given judgment to the Son (John 5:22). The accuser (the prosecutor) is Satan (Revelation 12:9-10). And the one who intercedes for us (the advocate) is also Christ, who died for us and rose again. If He had not risen, we would have remained in our state. He is glorified at the right hand of divine majesty and intercedes before God on our behalf. Our beloved, who intercedes for us, is the same Judge who condemns us. The one who passes

judgment on us is the same one who washed us with His blood. This scene led the Apostle Paul to sing the hymn of love that follows.

Sequence of ideas in verses 1-34.

1-16: Those who walk in the Spirit become children of God.

17: The children of God inherit glory with Christ, but there are still sufferings on earth.

18: When we see this glory, we will find that the sufferings we endured are nothing compared to this glory.

19-23: It is not only humanity that will be glorified, but all of creation. Creation has been subjected to curse because of humanity, but when humanity is glorified, all of creation will be glorified with it. However, we are currently in the midst of the sufferings of this world, with our eyes fixed on the hope of this awaited glory.

24: Why hope? Because we are confident that Christ has accomplished everything for our salvation, but we have not yet seen this prepared glory with our own eyes. Instead, we await it, expecting it with faith and hope.

25: And we must endure sufferings with patience, relying on our trust in God's promise.

26-27: The Spirit helps us and intercedes for us, aligning our will with the will of God so that we may be accepted before Him.

28: Patience also gives us confidence that whatever difficulties God allows are for our own good. Therefore, these pains are allowed by God for the salvation of our souls.

29-30: And what is God's purpose for us? To be conformed to the image of His Son.

31-34: Is there any greater love than this?! And would anyone who has given his Son for us deprive us of any insignificant thing on earth? This is a response to anyone who doubts God's love for them, influenced by the questioning of Satan. That God does not love them because He allows them to experience pain. The response here is... Would anyone who has given his Son for my sake, accept leaving me in pain without this pain serving the purpose of attaining the likeness of His Son.

**Verse (35): "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"**

In the face of everything that Christ has done through His incarnation, redemption, sufferings for justifying us and sending the Holy Spirit, and giving us the Law of the Spirit of Life, the Apostle finds nothing in himself but this hymn of love to respond to love with love. "**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?**" refers to our love for Christ. "**Shall tribulation, or distress**" - This was evident in the martyrs willingly surrendering themselves to death out of love for Christ.

(When the soldiers came to burn St. Polycarp and an opportunity for escape presented itself, his people asked him to flee. He replied, "Christ has been with me for 86 years, and in all this time, I have not seen any betrayal from Him. Shall I betray Him now after 86 years?") The hardships are directed towards us to make us forsake Christ, but the Holy Spirit pours His love into us for God, enabling us to triumph over the tribulations imposed upon us every day. We overcome them because of this love. No longer do afflictions or pains break the spirit, but they become a cause for entering the procession of victory and triumph under the leadership of the suffering Christ.

**Verse (36): "As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted**

**as sheep for the slaughter.'"**

This verse is taken from Psalm 44:22. "All day long" means throughout all the time we live and suffer. "We are killed" and "We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" may signify:

[1] We are exposed to death from the enemies of Christ because of our adherence to Him. And the image of sheep taken for slaughter used by the Apostle here is because we are constantly exposed to danger and death from those who persecute us, viewing us as sheep prepared for slaughter.

[2] It can also be understood that we offer ourselves as living sacrifices in service, and as fasting and praying, disregarding the pains of the body and continuing to serve God until the very last breath.

[3] We live a life of death, meaning that we stand as dead to sin (Romans 6:11).

**Verse (37): "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."**

**"We are more than conquerors"** This is a unique way of triumph, resembling the victory of Christ, who triumphed over principalities through the cross. The world's way of victory is through fire and sword, but the Christian's way of victory is through enduring fire and sword with faith and patience. In fact, by this, they become greater than conquerors. Whatever a conqueror gains in a worldly battle, they lose something in return. But what do we lose? Only some temporary pains. These pains are like the fire that purifies gold. Even the loss of the body is not a true loss, as it is dust and earthly. The losses are very minimal, and the gains are the weight of eternal glory, majesty, honor, and peace here on earth. Those who fight against us are actually fighting against God Himself.

**Reflection on envy:** Do we fear envy? The envy of people does not harm us because we are preserved in the hands of God (Luke 17:11-12). If the Father and the Son are preserving us, can anyone harm us? But we pray in a prayer of thanksgiving. "All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan" - every blessing we receive increases his hatred towards us, and he schemes against us. God allows this, but we come out of these schemes with great gains. What illustrates this idea is what happened with King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20). He, in his holiness, agitated the demons, who in turn agitated his enemies against him. But what was the result of the conspiracy? They returned with plunder and continued to carry it for several days. This is the meaning of being more than conquerors. But in humility, we say to God, "Lead us not into temptation." However, if God allows a trial, we will return as more than conquerors. This is how the humble Saint Anthony faced the demons.

**Verses (38-39): "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

**"Neither death nor life"** - Death has become less frightening as it is a transition into the bosoms of the saints in the company of angels. The horrors of death or the pleasures of life are unable to



separate us from the love of Christ. We will not be separated from Him, neither in this life nor after death. **"Nor angels nor principalities nor powers"** - The angels and principalities serve as ranks for the angels. There are two types of angels: [1] The righteous angels who do not wish to separate us from the love of Christ. [2] The wicked angels, who are the demons, and they are unable to separate us. The righteous angels rejoice in our repentance, while the wicked ones are bound by the cross. **"Nor things present nor things to come"** - For God is in control of all things. My life is in His hands, and He loves me and redeemed me. **"Nor height"** - The height of success, prosperity, and false glory (as it is not permanent) and positions. **"Nor depth"** - The depth of hardships, shame, and disgrace. Height may also refer to the storms in the sky, while the depth refers to the depths of the seas or the depths of prisons. Nothing can lift us up or bring us down, capable of separating us from the love of Christ. **"Nor any other created thing"** - Even if there were other unknown creations, they would not be able to separate us from the love of God. **"Which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"** - Our steadfastness in Christ is what has given us this love. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, except one thing: unrepented sin. Sin extinguishes the Holy Spirit who pours love into our hearts and dims our spiritual senses, causing us to no longer see Christ and consequently lose His love. The Holy Spirit, who the Apostle said pours the love of God into our hearts (Romans 5:5), is the one who poured all this love into His heart.

# Comments on the previous chapters.

## **How did Adam live in the Garden of Eden?**

Adam, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and God is love (1 John 4:8). So, Adam loved God. Adam's pleasure was in his love for God because God took pleasure in the sons of Adam (Proverbs 8:31). Again, this was because Adam was created in the image of God. Since Adam loved God with all his heart, the energy of love in Adam was sanctified, that is, dedicated and reserved for God. This resulted in Adam being in a state of remarkable joy that humans do not know now, and this is the meaning of the word "Eden" which is a Hebrew word that means joy and happiness. Therefore, this was God's will in the creation of man...

## **That humans live in eternal joy.**

And love is a powerful energy within humans that constantly drives them towards God, and the more a person turns to God, the more their joy increases.

## **What happened after sin and the fall?**

As we mentioned, Adam in the garden had one goal, which was God. Having one goal means, as the word simplicity in the Bible (in English) 'Single-hearted', all of his heart was directed towards God, he had no other goal but God. One of the laws of love is that you believe what the one you love and trust in his love tells you. Adam's fall was that he believed the devil and disbelieved God whom he loved, thus the direction of Adam's heart changed and was no longer simple. The simplicity of Adam's heart meant his continuous joy and God's joy in him. It also meant that Adam's body was luminous (Matthew 6:22). The energy of love in Adam was distorted, it turned to corrupt desires, and was no longer sanctified, so he lost the joy and luminous state. Corrupt desires filled his heart. This state was inherited by all of Adam's descendants. This is the meaning of his expulsion from the garden, meaning his loss of the state he was in, in fact, Adam and his offspring died (see Genesis 5) to see that all Adam's children, because they are in the image of Adam, died like him. Adam's children lost their luminous nature and the eternal joy that God wanted for them. A muddy impurity entered their lives, they became like a cup with clear water and this impurity entered it, the water became turbid and lost its transparency, and this is what we call original sin, which we inherited as children of Adam. Sin spread in the world, and Paul said, "all have gone astray and have become corrupt" (Romans 3:12). Humans died, their joy was lost, and God grieved over this. He grieved over Adam's disobedience, for obedience is a sign of love. God's love was evident in His gifts to Adam (a garden, meaning a beautiful creation in which he lived in amazing joy... ).

In contrast, Adam's love for God was manifested in his obedience. When Adam showed disobedience, God grieved over it and was saddened that humans have lost the state of joy and eternal life that He intended for them. Although humans fell, God, in order to help them experience joy as much as possible, asked in His commandments: 1) You shall not covet (The Ten Commandments), 2) Love the Lord your God with all your heart (Deuteronomy 6:5).

Whoever tries to do this will gradually regain the state of joy.

## **Is this the end?**

It is absolutely impossible for God to have a plan and then for this plan to fail as a result of

Satan's envy... And there was redemption... And there was baptism, in which we are buried with Christ and rise with Him united with Him (Romans 6:5), so we have eternal life which is the life of Christ with whom we are united (Romans 6:8), and it is eternal because Christ will not die again (Romans 6:9). But struggle is necessary, and the struggle here is...

1) We must force ourselves to remain dead to sin (Romans 6:11) and we have indeed gained strong authority over sin because of grace (the power of the Holy Spirit working within us) (Romans 6:14). And if we make a mistake, the Holy Spirit grieves us for our sin (John 16:8).

2) We must remain in a constant state of moving towards Christ (prayer, praise, reciting psalms, unceasing prayer) and if we make a mistake, we repent and return. And the blood of Jesus Christ purifies from every sin. Let us note that we must and will make mistakes because we are still in this body where sin dwells (Romans 7:20), but there is always a solution, and this is one of the blessings of redemption. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us.

Therefore, repentance is constantly moving towards God (1 John 1:6-10). This constant move towards God is what the Bible calls simplicity (single-hearted). That's why the groom says to his bride in the Song of Songs, "O my dove, my perfect one" (Song of songs 2:5). The dove has the characteristic of simplicity, that is, always returning to the place it came from (Noah's ark, the tower it came from, the carrier pigeon) and the life of repentance is a constant departure from evil and a constant direction towards Christ. This is what brings joy to the heart of Christ, so we say, "O my dove" (which always turns to me) "my perfect one" (for we are counted as perfect in Christ). Whoever constantly turns to Christ in repentance and leaves his sin, the life of Christ is confirmed in him. Conversely, whoever leaves Christ and pursues his sin loses his eternal life, for there is no fellowship between light (Christ) and darkness (the sinful behavior that Satan presents to us). Those who remain in the life of Christ have righteous deeds, acts of righteousness, and their members are instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13), and their good deeds glorify the heavenly Father, as He gives us His life to walk in righteousness for the glory of God's name. Those who do not walk in righteousness, the Holy Spirit convicts them for the righteousness they do not walk in (John 16:8). This is what is called positive struggle.

### **In sin, my mother conceived me (Psalm 51).**

We are born like this in sin = the muddy impurity fills the clear water cup. So, we hate and lust...

### **The blessings of redemption.**

Forgiveness of sins / Sonship to God / The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us / Joy and peace as a result of the love that God's Spirit pours into us (Romans 5:5) / We are counted as perfect in Christ / The grace that gives us authority over sin / We trample on snakes and scorpions and all the power of the enemy / We walk in righteousness and glorify God / We live a heavenly life / We inherit God, we inherit with Christ in eternal life, eternal glory, and eternal joy... etc.

### **Does all of this come to fruition?**

All of this has been happened... But we are still in the body which is filled with muddy impurity. Satan's work is always to stir the waters to provoke impurity, thus arousing lusts, hatred, hostility, wishing evil for others... etc., but let us know that Satan has no authority over us, he is merely intellectual power only. He presents us with sin, and anyone who accepts and is attracted to it, returns and confirms Satan's assertion that there is pleasure and happiness in sin, and so he is deceived by his own lust (James 1:14). In doing so, he repeats Adam's fall, who thought that God lied and believed Satan, thus losing his joy. The difference between us and Adam is that

when Adam fell, there was no means for the forgiveness of his sin or the renewal of his nature, so he died.

Christ came with His blood to atone, that is, to cover our sin and restore life to us. Truly because of this, we have not yet received all the blessings of redemption. We have received what is called the guarantee (Ephesians 1:14). We have begun to taste the grace of victory over Satan and over sin and lust. We have begun to taste the joy and delight in sonship. But the rest of the blessings of redemption, we will receive in heaven when we put on the glorified body, and this is what is called adoption, the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23), and this is what we anticipate. Here is complete joy, complete peace, and eternal glory. The perfect Son cannot sin (1 John 3:9). But we still sin as the book says, "The righteous falls seven times a day and rises" (Proverbs 24:16), and St. John says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves... and make Him a liar" (1 John 1:8-10). We fall into sin because of Satan's stirring of the impurity in us, thus losing the state of complete joy... This is what made the Apostle Paul say, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death" (Romans 7:24), so that he may live a life of complete joy when he leaves his body.

**The law of the Spirit of life:** Indeed, there is something called the law of sin (Romans 7:23), and this is the muddy impurity that we inherited from our father Adam. Through redemption, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, to give us a power capable of suppressing this impurity to the bottom of the cup, making the water clear again. This is what the Apostle Paul here called "condemning sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). The more we struggle (both positively and negatively), the more grace increases within us and condemns sin, that is, it returns the impurity to reside at the bottom of the cup, the water returns to its transparency, and joy returns to us, the feeling of sonship, and the sensation of God's love (Romans 8:31-39). This is the law of the Spirit of life, that is, it is a new law (the law) that the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of life) has placed within us. It restores eternal life to us by confirming us in Christ when we leave sin and turn towards Christ.

**My dove, my perfect one.**

We have seen that we are considered perfect if our direction is always towards Christ, as a dove always heads to its home, and as Noah's dove returned to the ark. Therefore, we saw that among the blessings of redemption is adoption (sonship to God). But as John said, the perfect Son cannot sin, but we still sin. So, what does the earnest of sonship mean? It is that through repentance and confession, that is, by constantly turning to Christ, we regain our sonship, and that is by our firmness in Christ, through the forgiveness of our sins, we become the perfect dove that, even if it leaves its tower, i.e., its home, it always returns to it. Note the beauty of the verse and its arrangement in the first letter of John.

**\*The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin...** And is there anyone who does not sin?

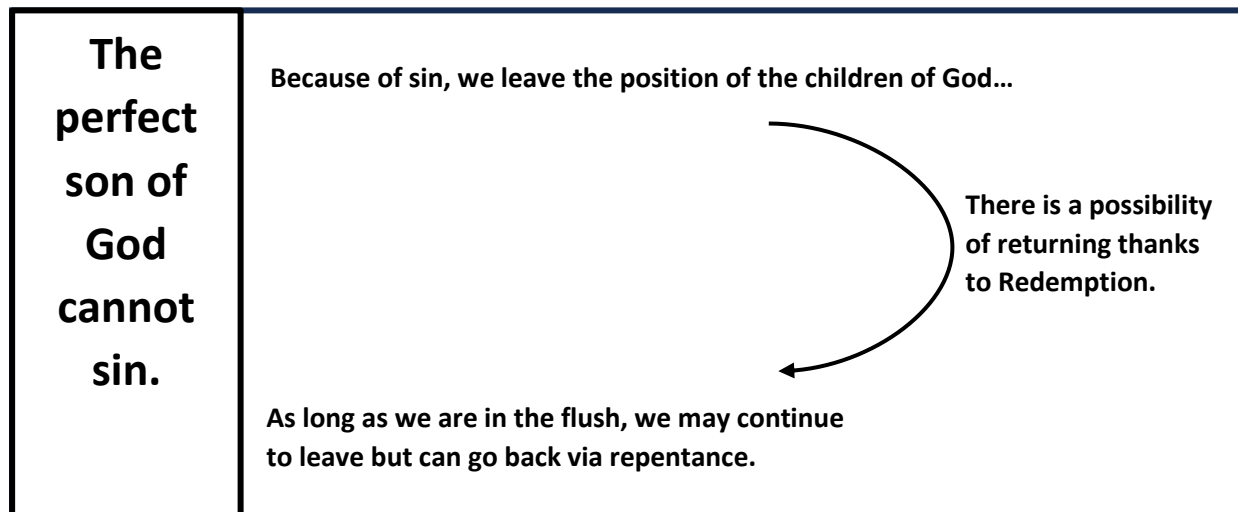
**\*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves...** And how do we return?

**\*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.**

Note that on the day of the baptism of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father rejoiced in the return of His children (us) to His bosom = "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**" The Son was in the water, announcing His acceptance of death and His resurrection (redemption) upon His emergence. His baptism was the foundation of the Sacrament of Baptism. So, we received sonship through the redemption of Christ, which was to be accomplished on the cross, and through baptism, which he was establishing on the day of Jordan.

The Holy Spirit was in the form of a dove descending upon the body of Christ, which is His

church. The form of the dove is because the work of the Holy Spirit is to establish us in Christ (through baptism, the sacrament of chrismation, repentance, confession, and the Eucharist, i.e., the sacraments in general) which establishes us in the body of Christ and fills us with love that makes us have a single direction towards Christ. This is done by filling us with the love of Christ and if we depart (through sin), we return by the work of the Spirit. Thus, we are in a state of constant return to Christ. We must sin as long as we are in the body, but what is important is the constant return, like the dove that leaves its home but always returns to dwell in it, so we always remain in Christ.



And this continues until we receive the full redemption of our bodies, that is, we receive the glorified body that cannot sin, and to which Satan cannot come. This is the meaning of heavenly Jerusalem having gates (Revelation 21:13), we enter and do not leave. And Satan does not enter it "But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." (Revelation 21:27), that is, those who were able to stand firm in Christ, who is eternal life.

As for the pleasures of sin that Satan presents to us, it is deception, for he is "a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

**\*The Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts (Romans 5:5).**

The love of God filled Adam's heart in Paradise and was distorted by sin, so he loved the world and what is in it, and the love of God in his heart diminished. Through redemption, the love of God was poured into us by the Holy Spirit given to us. But how?

1) The Spirit takes what is Christ's and gives to us, that is, He tells us about Christ so we love Him (John 14:16).

2) He condemns the sin within us, that is, He suppresses the desires within us so they become as if they were dead - the transparency of the water cup returns = the love of God returns and fills the heart.

3) This transformation in the state of the heart is what is called a heart of flesh instead of our stony hearts which have hardened and no longer feel the love of God (Ezekiel 11:19).

This is what Jeremiah called "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33). Writing the law on the heart of flesh means that a person fulfills the

commandment of their beloved because they love them. A woman who loves her husband cannot even think of betraying him, and this is what Jesus Christ said (John 14:23). Therefore, Jeremiah called this the "new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31), the covenant of love, the heart that felt God's love, loved God, and kept his commandments. This is the love with which the Holy Spirit filled our hearts, this is the law of the Spirit of life. Therefore, those whose hearts are filled with love for Christ obey Christ out of love, not out of obedience to the law's commands (Galatians 5:22-23). And those whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ are always directed towards Christ, and no matter how far they stray due to sin, they feel alienated in the place of sin and quickly return to Christ like a dove, the Holy Spirit helps them with this. That's why we hear the bridegroom's (Christ's) words in the Song of Songs to his bride (the human soul) or the Church "Turn, turn" (Song of Solomon 6:13). Therefore, in this life, we are on a constant journey of returning to God. And when we wear the glorified body, we do not go out again.

### **I am the Lord who heals you (Exodus 15:26).**

The Church prays in the prayers for the sick and says, "For you are the true physician of our souls, bodies, and spirits."

And the Lord Jesus Christ, through His redemption, has provided us with this complete healing for our souls, bodies, and spirits.

#### **1) Healing of the soul.**

The soul refers to feelings and emotions... etc. God created man to be joyful. But with sin, we lost our joy. Through redemption, God sent us His Holy Spirit to dwell in us, whose fruits are love and joy... (Galatians 5:22). So instead of hatred for others, we started to love even our enemies. And instead of sadness, joy returned to us. The Lord of Glory says, "you now have sorrow. But I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you... Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:20-24). What do we ask for, for our joy to be full other than the Holy Spirit who is the topic that the Lord was talking to His disciples about in this chapter (John 16). Also, our Lord Jesus says, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13). Because joy has become available to the children of God, and it is God's goal in creating man, the Apostle Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). Just as joy returned, peace also returned, which is also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Regarding this, the Lord of Glory says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). The world gives money and sensual pleasures... etc., But Christ, the King of Peace, gives a different kind of peace that fills the heart. The Psalmist said about it, "The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?... Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear..." (Psalm 27:1-6).

#### **2) Healing of the spirit.**

When the spirit is separated from God, it dies because God is life. This was what happened with sin; man died, for there is no fellowship between God, who is light, and sin, which is darkness.

However, in redemption, there is healing for the spirit. Christ, who united his humanity with his divinity, united with humanity, and eternal life returned to man.

Man was created incorruptible, and with sin, the first creation was corrupted and separated from God. And there was redemption, so what did Christ give us through his redemption: -.

Man is body, soul, and spirit, and with sin, the body was corrupted, the soul lost its peace, and

the spirit was separated from God.

And the redemption that began with the incarnation... Why did the Son of God take on a body? This was so He could die in this body, as the divinity does not die. Christ died so that He could rise... He rose so that He could ascend and be glorified in His human body (John 17:5).

And why was all this? In baptism, we became united with Christ in His death and resurrection. And whoever overcomes and remains united with Him will also be glorified with Him (John 17:22).

Christ's body before His death on the cross was a body with a human life that could be separated from the body and die.

As for the resurrection, Christ has attained eternal life that does not separate from Him.

And through baptism, we die to the first creation and rise united with Christ, and His eternal life becomes ours.

We notice that Christ in the tomb, His body was dead, and the resurrection occurred, and eternal life united with the dead body.

And the same thing happens to us now, we die in baptism with the body of sin, then the eternal life of Christ unites with us.

Therefore, we must continue to strive to keep this body of sin dead to sin so that the life of Christ may continue in us.

There are two paths before man... the path of life and the path of death (as the prophet Moses said to the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)). Similarly, with the same concept, the Apostle Paul says, "do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? ... But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." (1 Corinthians 6:16-17).

So, spiritual healing comes from uniting with the Lord, considering ourselves dead to sin, so that Christ's eternal life, which He raised from the dead, continues eternally united with us. And we have eternal life. Refer to Romans 12:1, Romans 6:11, Colossians 3:1-11, Galatians 5:24, and Galatians 6:14.

Again, we say that after Christ completed His redemptive work, He sent us the Holy Spirit, who establishes us in Christ.

### **How do we live now?**

Those who live as though dead are seen by people as different in their views and inclinations from them. They do not merge with them in the path of their sins and sensual pleasures, they live as if crucified to the world (Galatians 6:14). What drives them to this? Their faith in glory prepared for them in heaven. Their belief that if they chose the path of pain and abandoned the pleasures of the world, they would share in the glory with Christ. This is what the Apostle Paul said, "If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17). With this concept, the Church chants... **Your death, O Lord, we proclaim, and Your holy resurrection and ascension into the heavens, we confess.**

**Your death, we proclaim** = The good news is not that Christ died, but that we practice the life of mortification, that is, death to sin.

**And Your resurrection we confess** = That is, we believe and have hope in eternal glory.

### **3) Healing of the body.**

Certainly, physical illnesses are the results of sin, and Christ has provided healing for many. God wants health for the human body, and He first created us perfect without flaw. But the loving God, who turned our punishment into salvation, now allows some diseases, by which He heals the spirit so we are saved: for example, Job and the Apostle Paul when He allowed Satan to discipline the fornicator of Corinth. In fact, God allowed Satan to strike the Apostle Paul himself

to keep him from becoming conceited because of the surpassing great revelations (1 Corinthians 5 + 2 Corinthians 12). "For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (1 Peter 4:1).

**So, what is meant by healing the body?** God created man to work and guard the Garden (Genesis 2:15), and we find the Apostle Paul in the New Testament saying that we are created as a new creation for good works (Ephesians 2:10). God gave us the body with its members to complete the work required of us. And whoever succeeds in using his members successfully to accomplish what God wants, the Apostle Paul says his members have become instruments of righteousness (Romans 6), and conversely, if one follows the path of sin, his members become instruments of sin. Therefore, healing the body means that man successfully performs the work for which he was created.

So is there a contradiction between a person having members that are instruments of righteousness while he is in a state of illness or physical weakness?... There is no contradiction, and the evidence is the physical weakness of the Apostle Paul, and God shows His strength in him. Indeed, he preached to all of Europe while he was not physically capable.

For example, the television is designed to give us picture and sound, and this is done through electronic circuits placed in a wooden box, for example. Let's assume that this box is deformed or broken but the picture is beautiful, and the sound is clear, then we say that this television is performing its function efficiently.

And for the third time, we say that the Holy Spirit who dwells in us gives each of us the gift by which he successfully performs his work (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). And if his body is weak, the spirit helps our weaknesses (Romans 8:26), and God's strength works and supports this weak person "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).



# Chapter Nine

Paul the Apostle discusses three topics concerning the Jews in this letter of Romans:

1. Their physical descent from Abraham is a special privilege for them, but he explained to them that their descent from him through faith is even more important, and the most important thing is their descent from God through Christ.
2. The need is not for the law, but rather the goal of the law is Christ. For the law was unable to justify, but it could only reveal sin. However, faith in Christ justifies.
3. The privilege of the Jews as a chosen people is discussed in chapters 9-11. This is a sensitive issue for the Jews, and the apostle, with great sensitivity, wants to win them over without closing the door to the Gentiles. The apostle does not deny that God has chosen them as his people, but he emphasizes that this does not depend on any privilege or special merit on their part, but rather on the love of God, "who shows mercy to whom he wills." In this understanding, God also declared his love for the Gentiles and chose them as well. In chapter 11, the Gentiles are warned not to be arrogant towards the Jews, for the Jews are the original olive tree and the Gentiles have been grafted into it. In the end times, the Jews will accept faith in Christ after their long rejection. In chapter 11, there is a warning to the Gentiles against their pride, for pride exposes the person to being cut off from the olive tree (the people of God, whether in the Old or New Testament).

In this chapter, the Apostle does not address the issue of human free will, but rather God's right to choose nations, just as He had the right to choose the Jews. However, the problem was that the Jews denied God's right to choose nations. The Apostle wants to prove that God's choice of nations is a right that belongs to Him. God showed mercy to the Jews, not because of any merit on their part, but solely because of God's mercy. And this mercy also has the right to work in others as well. However, throughout the letter, the Apostle emphasizes the freedom of human will and God's sanctification of it, for He is its giver.

## **The vessels of honor and the vessels of dishonor**

In this chapter, Paul the Apostle says that God is like a potter who is free to make vessels of honor from a lump of clay, and to make vessels of dishonor from another lump (verse 21). Some people misunderstand this opinion, thinking that it contradicts human freedom, as if God chooses and determines that so-and-so should be a vessel of dishonor, and no matter what he does, he must be destroyed, but God has chosen this. However, God is free to create Moses as a vessel of honor and to create Judas Iscariot as a vessel of dishonor.

This is naive understanding. What's important is to understand why Paul wrote these words. The Jews say about themselves that they are God's chosen people alone, and it is not God's right to choose nations to be his people. Paul responds by saying that it is God's right to appoint the Jews as a chosen people for a period of time and the nations as vessels of dishonor for a period of time, and then he is free to accept the nations whenever he wishes. So, the issue that Paul is discussing here is not human freedom, but God's freedom. Therefore, it is important to understand the occasion on which the verse was said in order to understand it.

And what we want to confirm is that this is the concept of the entire Holy Bible, that God is not against the freedom of man, for God does not appoint one person for salvation and another for destruction, but rather God wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). And what hinders the will of God is my freedom and my will (Matthew 23:37).

As for human freedom, it is evident from the rebellion of many individuals and numerous nations against God, even to the extent of disrespecting Him (as seen in communist regimes throughout history). Nevertheless, God shines His sun upon them and provides them with food and drink.

If God is the one who determines who will be destroyed and who will be saved, then how will God hold people accountable on the Day of Judgment? How does the verse "Justified" apply to your statements and prevail when judged? We should understand that God is like a teacher who knows who will pass and who will fail the exam. Rather, He faithfully puts effort into teaching each individual in His classroom. God has given everyone opportunities for salvation, but each person's response to God's work is based on their own free will. God gives each person their own talents and abilities, and He will require from each person according to what He has given them. For those who have been given five, He will require five, and for those who have been given two, He will require two.

God desires to create everyone as vessels of glory, as evidenced by the fact that He created humans in His own image. When humanity fell, Christ came and sent the Holy Spirit to restore us once again to the image of God (2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 4:19). Therefore, God does not intend to create a human to be a vessel of dishonor. Let us consider examples.

**The Devil:** God created the Devil in the most beautiful form to be a vessel of glory, but he himself chose to become a vessel of dishonor. Notice the lamentation that God expressed with sadness when the cherubim angel fell and became Satan after being full of beauty. Also, observe the descriptions that God gave about Satan and how he was (Isaiah 14:12 + Ezekiel 28:11-15). It was God's will for all His creation to be vessels of glory and for all His creation to be saved. But Satan chose sin, and God allowed him to become a vessel of dishonor. However, he also had a role in God's eternal plan for the salvation of His children, as Satan became an instrument of discipline for God's children. For example, Satan was the one who devised the plan of the cross for the redemption of humanity. And it was God who allowed him to strike Paul to prevent him from being prideful. And he disciplined Job to purify him and free him from his sin.

**Judas:** Did God choose Judas to be a vessel of dishonor? Absolutely not. For God chose him from among the twelve disciples and bestowed upon him, just like the rest of the disciples, the same talents. He also learned from the teachings of the Lord Jesus and witnessed his miracles. He even healed the sick and cast out evil spirits. Moreover, the Lord Jesus washed Judas' feet. However, it was Judas himself who chose to become a vessel of dishonor after God created him and prepared him to be a vessel of glory. God knew that Judas would commit this betrayal, but can it be said that Christ prepared him to be a vessel of dishonor? And we noticed that Judas had the same opportunities as the other twelve disciples. Yet, Judas' mistake was part of the plan of salvation. For God is capable of bringing sweetness (salvation) out of bitterness (Judas' betrayal).

And Judas was influenced by Satan because he rejected all opportunities for salvation that were presented to him by the Lord Jesus. Even in the last attempt by Christ to embrace him and give him the morsel in his mouth, declaring his love for him until the end, it was Christ's rebuke that broke his heart: "Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Perhaps this rebuke pushed him towards repentance, and if he had done so, God would have accepted him. When Judas rejected all opportunities for salvation, Christ

abandoned him, and he became an easy prey for the demons. Christ used to protect his disciples from stumbling (John 17:12), "When I was with them, I kept them." But when Christ removed his protection from him, after Judas, by his own will, left Christ, he became a vessel of dishonor (similar to what was said about King Saul, that the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit entered him - (1 Samuel 16:14). However, when Satan entered Judas, God also used him as part of his eternal plan for salvation. Every creature of God has a role to play in the plan of salvation. God created man free and does not force him to do anything. But he knows the extent of his response to the opportunities given to him by God. Whoever responds to these opportunities has a role in the plan of salvation as a vessel of glory. And whoever rejects the outstretched hand of God also has a role in the plan of salvation, but as a vessel of dishonor (Proverbs 16:4). What prevents the potter from making a vessel of glory from the clay? It is the presence of impurities or a piece of stone in the clay. This is analogous to the presence of the love of sin in the heart of a person, which turns him into a vessel of dishonor.

God gives everyone equal opportunities for salvation, so that the verse "So that you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged" applies to all. However, as we have seen, everyone has their role in the plan of salvation, even if it is a vessel of dishonor. God created everything for His purpose, and even the wicked for the day of evil (Proverbs 16:4).

**Pharaoh:** Moses asks him to let the people go, but he refuses. And the plagues begin. God did not make him stubborn, but after being stubborn several times, God used his stubbornness.

**God hardened Pharaoh's heart** = meaning He allowed him to remain stubborn as a result of his defiance against God. However, God used his stubbornness and hardened heart to bring about good for both the Jewish and Egyptian people. The Jews came to know who their God, Yahweh, was and witnessed His mighty power, realizing that the Egyptian gods were nothing compared to Him. The Egyptians, on the other hand, recognized the futility of their own gods in the presence of the true God. What we can say is that God did not create or make Pharaoh stubborn, but rather He used his stubbornness and foolishness to be a tool and part of His plan of salvation. God utilizes human errors to fulfill His plan of redemption.

God works with His grace with every person, for God desires that all may be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore, we see in the parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9) that the Sower (God) knows the quality of each type of soil and does not withhold His seed from any type, whether it is good ground, rocky ground, thorny ground, or even the pathway.

And this is what God did with Pharaoh. Moses called him and warned him, and Pharaoh initially understood and responded, telling Moses and Aaron to pray for him. He even confessed that he and his people had sinned (Exodus 8:28, 9:27). But God's grace is astonishing, as it overflows even upon His adversaries. God informed Pharaoh that he needed to protect his livestock in the field from being destroyed by the hail (Exodus 9:19). Pharaoh witnessed that everything God had warned him about had happened. He should have understood who God is and the danger of defying Him. However, he hardened his heart. Why did he harden his heart? Because there was desire in his heart. He wanted to keep the people of God as slaves, working for him for free in exchange for their food. Just as the Apostle Paul says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7). No one can enjoy God's grace while being stubborn to Him arrogantly thinking they can combine it with indulging in their desires. This applies now to every sinner.

So far, the grace of God has been preserving Pharaoh from great wrath. Thus, there have been no losses to humans. No human lives have been destroyed. The losses are limited to crops, animals, and some inconveniences such as insects and the like.

However, in the face of Pharaoh's insistence on defying the will of God, God withheld His preserving grace from Pharaoh. Thus, the great wrath began, and the plagues intensified, leading to the death of the firstborns and the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea.

This is the same meaning as the verse "God gave them over to a debased mind" (Romans 1:28). God did not give them a wrong mindset, but rather withdrew His preserving grace that they did not deserve. They continued in their stubbornness with God, pursuing their own desires, and they descended into shameful passions (Romans 1:26).

**Saul of Tarsus / Paul the Apostle:** Saul of Tarsus was a vessel of humility, and he was persecuting.

The Church persecutes Christians, but he did not resist God's call and turned into vessels of honor. Thus, through repentance and response to God's call, any person can transform from a vessel of dishonor to a vessel of honor. God tries with every person to repent and become a vessel of honor, as it is written, "You have chastised me...for You are the Lord my God." (Jeremiah 31:18). Therefore, God calls everyone to repentance, and whoever responds becomes a vessel of honor.

**The story of the chosen people:** God chose the Jews because they were "the best of worst" and because their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were the best in this world. He chose this people to bring forth the Messiah, but the Jews misunderstood this and considered themselves to be the chosen people of God, while considering others as rejected (even calling them dogs). However, when the Messiah comes, he comes for everyone, for God is the God of the whole world. This is similar to choosing a piece of land, cleaning it, preparing it, and planting a type of excellent wheat, and treating this type until it becomes the best possible strain. Afterwards, there is expansion in cultivating it in all fields. The nations have no right to object as to why the Messiah did not come from them, for the Messiah cannot come from all the peoples of the world at the same time; he must come from a prepared people. And the Jews have no right to object to the salvation of the nations, for God, the God of all, chose them to be His people for a specific time and purpose that culminated in the coming of the Messiah. First and foremost, no one has the right to object to God and His judgments, for His wisdom is above all (Romans 11:33-36).

The essence of the subject is that it is not valid for someone to justify his sin by saying that God created them in such a fallen state, as each person knows within themselves that they sin by their own will. We notice that the Apostle Paul explains that even someone who was once in a state of dishonor has the ability to be transformed into a vessel of glory if they repent and purify themselves. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

**Verse (1): "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit"**

After contemplating the grace, he has received, in which he abides and the glory that awaits him thereafter, the Apostle Paul suddenly pauses to remember his brethren and how they have deprived

themselves of what he has received. Paul, who serves and suffers in order to bring his children to the likeness of Christ, we find him here resembling Christ in his feelings and love.

1. The one who wept over Jerusalem.

2. He who desires that all be saved [Luke 19:41, 1 Timothy 2:4]. **I say the truth in Christ** = Paul the Apostle's statement **in Christ** summarizes everything he received by faith. It means that through his connection and union with Christ, he can only speak the truth. **And my conscience bears witness by the Holy Spirit** = And my conscience, which is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, testifies to my words.

**Verse (2): "that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart."**

Paul was accused of being hostile towards the Jews (Acts 28:21-22, 22:22, 24:25). However, here he affirms his deep love for them. In fact, his love for the Jews and his desire for their salvation is evidence of his love for God, as he declared at the end of chapter 8. His love for God is evident in his desire for the salvation of Jewish souls, and God desires the salvation of all people. Christ died for everyone, and the faith of all glorifies the name of God. Furthermore, his sorrow is attributed to their lack of faith, for they are his brethren according to the flesh.

**Verse (3): "For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh"**

This phrase indicates his strong love for his brethren. "According to the flesh" means that there are now brethren according to the spirit. For the Spirit has united us all in the one body of Christ, and as children we have become brothers praying together, saying "Our Father which art in heaven." This verse confirms the Apostle's strong desire for the return of the Jews and their faith in Christ.

And at the end of chapter 8, we hear from the Apostle that nothing separates him from the love of Christ. Does he mean that he is willing to sacrifice Christ i.e., to leave his Christian faith? Absolutely not. He is joyful and proud of what he has received, but in his love, he says that he suffers greatly for the deprivation his brothers experience. For example: a father went on a mission to a distant country and there tasted very delicious food. Here, he stops and thinks about his deprived wife and children who cannot taste this food, and he says, "I wish I hadn't come here so that I don't taste this while my loved ones are deprived of it." But he is definitely happy and enjoys what he eats. There are two kinds of feelings within this father, and this is what happened with Paul. There is a beautiful interpretation from St. John Chrysostom for this expression, that Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice, believing that God is able to raise him up. And Paul presents himself here as a sacrifice for his brothers, believing that God will not allow him to be deprived of Christ, but will bring the Jews to faith. And thus, God is glorified through their faith. In the Jews' faith in Christ, there is glory to God. So, Paul seeks the glory of God, even if it costs him his own life, out of his love for Christ. Here, Paul is likened to Moses, who said, "Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book" (Exodus 32:32). Here, Christ will not consider that Paul wants to leave the faith, but rather he will increase in splendor and glory in the eyes of God because he practices the work of love.

**Verse (4): "who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises"**

Paul grieves over the Israelites because they have strayed from the salvation prepared by Christ, even though they are descendants of Jacob who was given the name Israel as an honor to him. They received their father's name as an honor to them (Genesis 32:28), and God adopted them and manifested Himself to them in glory. He gave them the Old Covenant and the Law.

**"Israelites"** from the word Israel, which means "he who struggles with God." And Israel ruled for a period of time. But the true Israel (the Church) does not rule in earthly realms, but enjoys the fellowship of divine glory with the King of kings (Revelation 1:6). Israel is a title of honor and pride among the Jews, signifying strength and glory, unlike Jacob, which refers to Jacob as the weak and fleeing one.

**Adoption:** God referred to them as Israel, my firstborn son (Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1, Deuteronomy 14:1, Jeremiah 31:9). But they rebelled (Isaiah 1:2, Malachi 1:6). Therefore, they needed a complete transformation through the indwelling of the spirit of adoption in them, and the way of this adoption is faith in Christ.

**The glory:** refers to the people who have seen the glory of God firsthand (Exodus 24:17) and also through the pillar of light and the pillar of cloud (Exodus 40:34-38 + 1 Kings 8:11). The glory of God used to appear from between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant. When the Philistines took the Ark of the Covenant, Phinehas' wife said, "The glory has departed from Israel." But now, Christ is the glory of His people (Zechariah 2:5). Christ is among His people and dwells in them.

**The covenants:** God entered into covenants with His people, but they broke them (Hosea 8:1, Ezekiel 17:18). Therefore, believers needed to have a new covenant with God, written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Let us not forget that God entered into covenants with the fathers Abraham and Moses. However, these covenants were about the inheritance of Canaan, but the promised inheritance of the new covenant is heaven.

**The giving of the law:** refers to the law given by God Himself, unlike other nations where people established their own laws. They received a law, but they did not keep it.

**"Worship":** It refers to the principles and foundations of serving God, including rituals, prayers, prostrations, praise, and celebrations, as well as sacrifices (which all symbolize the New Covenant).

**And the promises:** are that they have received many promises, such as the inheritance of the land of Canaan, the promise of the birth of Isaac, and all of these promises are joyful appointments. And the most important promise that the Jews received is that the Messiah comes from them. Therefore, whoever believes in the Messiah from among them is the one who remains truly an Israelite, and whoever rejects the Messiah is not a true Israelite. That is why Christ said about Nathanael that he is truly an Israelite, without deceit, when he came to him and believed in him (John 1:47). What distinguished the Jews is that they are the children of the promise, so if they reject the promised one, they themselves become rejected.

**Verse (5): "Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."**

**And of whom are the fathers** (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). And from them **is Christ**, who came from them in **the flesh**, and for this reason God honored them with all this privilege, and this is sufficient for them as an honor. **Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all**, blessed forever. This means that Christ is the divine being united with His humanity. God over all means that God is the God of both Jews and Gentiles.

**Verse (6): "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel".**

**It is not that**, meaning it is not as one might think, **that the word of God has failed**. It may appear to the eye that God has rejected the Jews after all the blessings and covenants they received. But let us understand that God's promises to the Jews have not failed; rather, they continue for those among them who believe in Christ, who is the goal of their law. True Israel is understood in a spiritual sense, not based on physical descent (Romans 2:28, 29). Spiritual Israel is those who remain faithful to their inherited faith, who believe in Christ, who is the fulfillment of the promise and blessing to Abraham and Israel. As for those who reject Christ, they are descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, but they are not heirs of the promise and blessing of Abraham (Romans 9:7, 8).

The true Israelites are those who resemble their father Abraham in faith and actions (John 8:39). The true Israelites are those whose eyes have been opened to recognize Christ, like the disciples, apostles, and the 3000 who believed after Peter's sermon. Why did the Jews not recognize Christ? Christ is the image of the Father, "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). So, whoever knows the Father will necessarily know the Son, Jesus Christ, who is the image of the Father. "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.". Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.". Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:7-9). But due to their pride, the Jews could only see themselves, and they developed a distorted and false image of God, so they did not recognize Christ. Therefore, the Lord of glory said to them, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." (John 8:19). Their pride prevented them from knowing God. As the prophet Isaiah said, God dwells with the humble and contrite in heart (Isaiah 57:15). David says in Psalm 51, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." But the humble among them knew Him and believed in Him. That's why Peter said to Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

And we see in Romans 2:28-29 that the true Israel is the one who circumcises their heart by the Spirit, meaning they are given the grace of the Spirit that cuts off the love of sin from their heart:-

1. "And the Spirit now, in the New Testament, does not do this except for every believer who is baptized with water and the Spirit."
2. In the Old Covenant, it was the humble and simple-minded who were convinced by the Spirit of their need for a Savior, as they realized their inability to fulfill the commandments. Those who recognized this and lifted their eyes towards heaven, seeking God's mercy like the tax collector, God responded to them, and the Spirit helped them. Their eyes were opened, and they came to know Christ and believed in Him. But those who were filled with pride, seeking to establish their righteousness without God's help, like the Pharisee, did not believe in Christ. Such individuals cannot be considered true Israelites.

3. And these Jews who believed in Christ, and also the Gentiles who believed in Him, the Apostle called them "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). When the name of God is added to something, in the Hebrew understanding, it means magnifying that thing. Just as we say, "army of God" means a huge army, and so on "mountain of God". Therefore, when he says, "Israel of God", it means the Church that includes all the people of the world, both Jews and Gentiles.

**Verse (7): "nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.'"**

The Jews boast of being descendants of Abraham, but the apostle responds to them that not all of Abraham's children according to the flesh are children of the promise. For example, Ishmael is not claimed to be a descendant of Abraham based on the promise. It should be noted that the promise was for Isaac, who is a symbol of Christ, and both of them were born from a barren womb, which is impossible naturally. Therefore, the promise is specifically about the coming of Christ, who is not born according to nature. Therefore, the true Israelite is the one who believes in the promise, that is, believes in Christ. Thus, the Lord said about Nathanael that he is a true Israelite, because he said about Christ that he is the Son of God and the King of Israel. Here, the apostle presents Isaac as a symbol of sonship, because it is not based on the strength of the flesh or the law of nature, but rather according to the power of the divine promise. Therefore, the descendants of Abraham are those who are born by grace, not according to the flesh, but according to faith. Likewise, we are also born again by the word of God. In the baptismal font, we are formed and born by the word of God (Ephesians 5:26). So, we are born again like Isaac after the power of sin's aging has been overcome. And we continue to be born through baptism, not through the flesh or human desire, but through the Holy Spirit and the power of the word. As Saint John said, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Salvation is not a matter of physical sonship for any human being, no matter who that person is, but salvation is eternal life that exists only with God alone. And through physical birth, we are born dead because of sin. Heavenly glory does not enter the realm of the dead. Adam, who died in sin, gave birth to dead children. And the Son of God came to unite with us so that we become children of God, having eternal life, which is the life of God. In Christ, we have true sonship to God, through which we are saved. And this sonship was given to us by the supernatural promise of God and the redemptive work of Christ. We were dead because of sin, just as Abraham was physically dead, and similarly, Sarah's womb was dead. But according to the promise of God, life came out of Sarah's dead womb. God promised to bring life out of death, transforming the death within us into life. And whoever receives Christ, believes in Him, and is baptized, becomes united with Him and becomes a child of God, having eternal life, which is the life of Christ, and this is salvation.

**The promise: "Through Isaac your offspring will be called"** refers to the promise of Isaac's birth as a life coming out from a dead womb. We notice that God gave Abraham a promise that in his offspring all nations would be blessed. "And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). So, is Isaac, the son of Abraham, the one through whom all nations will be blessed?

Paul the Apostle says that the singular form of "seed" refers to Christ, for he did not say "seeds" but "seed" in the singular form, indicating one person, who is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

God reiterated this promise that He will bless all nations through the offspring of Isaac, "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 26:4). And God reiterated the promise with Jacob, "in



you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 28:14). Therefore, it is meant that the blessing will come through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

3. And by this, we understand that the blessing is Christ, in whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and who will come from the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Isaac was a symbol of Christ, as he was born like Christ from a barren womb that could not conceive. Isaac was born according to the promise, and Christ came and was incarnated according to the promise. And this is the blessing of the nations in Christ, for Christ will transform death into life for all the nations in him. Through our unity in the living Christ, the death within us is transformed into life. Therefore, the apostle Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). And this is the blessing by which the nations will be blessed, Christ, the offspring of Abraham according to the promise, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" Thus, all the believers, become children of the promise, for we have transitioned from death to life.

**Verse (8): "That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."**

What distinguishes Israel is that they are the children of Isaac, the son of the promise, and Isaac is a prophecy of death that God turns into life, and this is the work of Christ through His redemption. Therefore, the children of God are not those who are born according to natural laws, but according to God's appointments.

**The children of the flesh** are born dead, for the dead person, because of sin, gives birth to children who are condemned to death. This was the state of all humanity whether they were children of Abraham by flesh or others. As for the children of the promise, they have a new birth in which they are born alive through water and the Spirit, by being united with Christ. This is accomplished through baptism.

**Verse (9): "For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.'"**

Therefore, physically dead Abraham and Sarah, who is also physically dead, are not the parents of Isaac. Rather, Isaac is the child of the promise. And by this, we understand that the children of God are the children of the promise. They are not children by natural means, but by the grace of God.

**Verses (10-12): "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac. (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger. "**

The apostle continues to defend his viewpoint that God has the freedom to choose nations, not based on works, circumcision, or the law. The apostle uses the example of Isaac's birth, as some might argue that Ishmael was the son of a servant, and the children of Keturah were younger. Additionally, Keturah was also a servant, while we Jews are the children of Sarah, who is free. Therefore, the apostle gives another example of Jacob and Esau, who had the same father and mother, even from the same womb, as they were twins (Esau represents the older and more experienced Jews who rejected faith in God). Yet, God rejected Esau, even though he was the physical son of Isaac. Because, based on His foreknowledge, He knows

who is spiritually righteous (Romans 8:29). Furthermore, Jacob also came with the promise of "the older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23), and also Rebecca was not able to conceive. God answered Isaac's prayer for her (Genesis 25:21). Jacob is a son of prayer and promised blessing ("the older shall serve the younger").

### **Why did God choose Jacob over Esau?**

1. Based on His foreknowledge, He knew who would respond to His love and accept His invitation, even if they stumbled and had weaknesses, their faith remained genuine. His rejection of Esau is based on Esau's rejection of God and his resistance to Him (Romans 8:29). Through the story of Jacob and Esau in the Bible, we truly understand the validity of God's choice based on Esau's cruelty and disregard, and Jacob's holiness.

2. **"For the children not yet being born"**: The apostle here wanted to justify that the choice was made before dealing with the law, circumcision, or anything else, but by the free grace of God. For God manifested His love, knowing that Jacob would accept His free invitation and His divine work in him. But He chose him before he had any works. And thus, God chose the Jews and left the Gentiles, for He knew that the Jews would believe in Him. And when He chose the Gentiles, He knew beforehand that they would accept faith. He also chose the Gentiles before they had any works, and they were without the law. So, the Gentiles here were exactly like the choice of Jacob while he was in his mother's womb.

3. The Jews are unable to explain the reason for choosing Jacob, and likewise, everyone is unable to comprehend the secret of the openness of the door of faith for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews.

4. The apostle here is not talking about accepting faith or the necessity of struggle, but about the fact that God is free in His choice and in the timing of His choice. It is always clear that God was right in His choice, because of His foreknowledge. And this applies to the choice of the Jews first and then the choice of the nations. However, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of works and that God will reward each person according to his works (Matthew 16:27). And each person will receive their reward according to their labor (1 Corinthians 15:58). And the deeds of the dead will follow them (Revelation 14:13). He also confirms that the salvation of man is not achieved through good deeds outside the circle of faith. There is no salvation except through a righteous life, the one that Christ has brought to life in me through His righteousness. And the life of Christ in me is through faith and baptism (Mark 16:16). And the believer now strives because he has faith in the promises of God.

5. The Apostle shows us that God is revealed to us and that He is free in His predestined choices, so that no one exhausts themselves in examining the matters of God that cannot be examined. And whoever wants to think, let them put instinct before they think, which is that God is just in His affairs. And if we knew all the reasons for His judgments, we would say, "Amen." But God is not obligated to explain to us all the reasons behind His choices, so that we accept His judgments without examination, and do not subject them to the limitations of our limited minds but accept them with contentment and gratitude. And in our trust in God's justice in His choices, we know that God chooses those who choose Him. In general, we will not understand all the judgments of God now, "You do not understand now, but you will know after this." (John 13:7).

6. In his exposition, the Apostle Paul wants to convey that God does not impute righteousness based on works. No matter how righteous our works may be, they are nothing without Christ, for we are spiritually dead because of the sin of our father Adam. Instead, God imputes righteousness based on the promise of bringing life out of death. Isaac symbolizes Christ, who transforms death into life within us. This is what

we have seen in the Old Testament, that God gave many promises concerning the Messiah who would accomplish this. The fathers of the Jews awaited Him, saying, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!" (Isaiah 64:1). Faith is connected to the promise, as God calls and man believes. Faith is the response to the call. Works are connected to faith and the call. After Christ came, there is no choice except in Christ. There is no life apart from Christ, and this necessitates faith in Him and then baptism. And this is what happened: God called the Gentiles, and the Gentiles believed, were baptized, and received the life of Christ to walk in righteousness. Before Christ, the choice was for the one who would come from among them as the Messiah (God chose the Jews for the Messiah to come from among them). But after Christ, every believer is chosen, yet it is incumbent upon the believer to remain steadfast in their faith and love, and to overcome (Revelation 2, 3).

**Verse (13): "As it is written: 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'"**

The apostle said in the previous verse, "In order to confirm the purpose of God according to election." Here, he provides evidence from the prophecy of Malachi the prophet (1:2). But indeed, throughout history, it was evident that God loved Jacob and his descendants, and they had the temple and the inheritance of Canaan, while the Lord hated Esau. The validity of election is confirmed because God chooses based on His foreknowledge of what will happen.

But the apostle here is not speaking about the validity of choice, but about the freedom of God in choosing.

**Verse (14): "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!"**

If choice and preference primarily depend on God who calls humans, could it be that God has acted unjustly towards Esau? Far be it from us to entertain such a thought. We cannot comprehend all the secrets of God's wisdom. God is not unjust, even if His judgment appears incomprehensible to us.

**Verses (15-16): "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.'. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."**

When Moses asked God to show him His glory (Exodus 33), God answered him with this response, as if He wanted to say to him, "With all my appreciation for your efforts and hard work, seeing My glory is a free divine gift that is given, and not a reward for works, but it is certainly not given to the slack and lazy." And God alone knows who deserves the gifts of His love. "**God, who shows mercy**" means that God does not give according to works but according to His mercy, so there are no works in this world that would make someone deserving of seeing the glory of God. This does not mean that works are not important, for God requires us to pray so that He may give us (Matthew 9:37-38), as workers and servants to increase the harvest. And mercy here, in its general meaning, refers to the gifts of God and His blessings that Israel received for a period of time, separate from the nations.

And note that God did not say "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy and I will destroy whoever I want to destroy", for He uses His authority in compassion, love, and mercy. God does not want

the destruction of the sinner as He desires their repentance and salvation (Ezekiel 18:23). God is love, but He does not force anyone to love Him, and that is why Esau was not obliged to do so.

And we notice that God distributes His mercies to everyone, and if He withheld His mercy from any person, he would not live for a moment. He shows mercy to everyone, and His sun rises on the righteous and the wicked, giving each one their sustenance. Even our good deeds are given to us by His mercy, that we may do them (James 1:17), and it is not that our good deeds earn His mercies. But the apostle is still concerned with highlighting the freedom of God in His choice, as He chooses by His mercies and not according to anyone's works. He wants to demonstrate the absolute sovereignty of God in His choice of His chosen ones (referring to the nations, of course).

**"It is not for anyone who wishes or strives."** This is similar to what he says in 1 Corinthians 3:7, "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." Does this verse imply that God has eliminated the work of the planter and the waterer? Can a plant grow without a planter or a waterer? We find that the Apostle also says that he planted and Apollos watered, but God gave the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6). But what is important is the power of growth that comes from God, but this power of growth requires a planter and a waterer. We cannot isolate a verse from the rest of the book. We have other verses before us, such as "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" + "The one who endures to the end will be saved" + "Be faithful unto death." These verses require us to accept God with our free will. This means that we cannot ignore the positive role of human beings in enjoying free salvation. God desires our free will or our voluntary choice along with our sincere effort. The Bible is a complete unity; we do not deal with its separate parts, meaning that we do not deal with one verse separately from the rest of the book.

And here the Apostle Paul is not talking about an issue related to individuals, but about the acceptance of the Gentiles and whether it is God's right to accept them or not. The logic of the Jews is that God should not accept the Gentiles. As for us as individuals, we strive and strive with our free will, and God helps us because He is always generous. So, when God says "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy", we must also consider that God is just and righteous, so He will have mercy on those who deserve His mercy.

Therefore, we must strive and exert ourselves with all the strength we have, and may God give us according to His mercies. It is astonishing for a person to request that God treat him according to his deeds! For if God were to deal with us according to our deeds, we would have actions and sins that would lead us to destruction. Therefore, we dare not ask from God anything but mercy. This is the reasoning of our Church, which constantly repeats (Kyrie eleison - Lord, have mercy). The Jews, due to their pride, did not see their mistakes, because they only saw their righteous deeds to boast about, and they did not want to see their sins. They only saw what they had committed to the commandments of the law, so they sought their reward according to these deeds. And this is what is called self-righteousness. This pride greatly displeased God. And we hear the words of the scripture regarding people like them, "Keep to yourself, Do not come near me, For I am holier than you! These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day." (Isaiah 65:5).

**Verses (17-18): "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.". Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."**

The problem addressed by the Apostle is that the Jews deny that God includes the Gentiles in the fold of salvation, as they do not consider them to be God's people. It seems that the Jews want to define God's authority, so the Apostle here shows that God is absolute in His authority and does whatever He pleases, with no limitations on His authority. However, His authority is never tainted with any injustice whatsoever.

And God chose Moses and rejected Pharaoh because He knew Moses' heart and supported him to glorify Himself through him by showing mercy. And God knew the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, so He left him in his stubbornness. Notice that it was Pharaoh who continued in his stubbornness and insults towards God. God did not remove this hardness until He glorified Himself through this wicked violence. And in this way, Moses fills the cup of His glory, and Pharaoh fills the cup of his evil. And God is glorified through this, as He is glorified through that. So, whether a person is righteous or wicked, God uses both of them to fulfill His eternal plan. God used the hardness of Pharaoh and did not remove it. He raised His hand and His mercy from him, so he remained in his hardness to show the Egyptians and the Jews the glory of Yahweh and to realize the futility of idols. Similarly, God left Israel for 2000 years in their hardness and dispersion, to show the world that God had forsaken and rejected them, and that He will return and accept them in the end of days. And with the same logic, God left the pagan world to revolt and harden their hearts, and then God had mercy on them and accepted them. And with this logic, God hardened the heart of Judah and Israel for redemption, and through their stumble, salvation came (refer to the introduction of the chapter).

The Apostle here confuses the Jews with their own thoughts. They accepted God's mercy towards them and the downfall of Pharaoh under his cruelty without objection. So why don't they accept now that God is opening the door of his mercy to the nations? In general, the unbeliever always stands in a critical position towards God. Let us pray so that God gives us wisdom to understand and accept His actions.

**Therefore, He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.** God, in His love, created all mankind to rejoice before Him in His glory and to reflect His glory upon them, like a father rejoices over his children when they rejoice before him (Isaiah 43:7). God's goal was for all to be united (see the explanation of John 17:20-23). But humanity fell, and the creation, which was initially without corruption, became corrupted. Christ came to restore the original image and gather all in His body, as a temple where each of us is a living stone in this temple (1 Peter 2:4-5). However, due to corruption, humanity acquired a rebellious and disobedient nature. In His love, God was compelled to discipline His children here on earth in order to secure their salvation. For example, God allowed a famine that brought the prodigal son back, and He allowed Satan to afflict His children for their discipline (this happened with the Apostle Paul, Job, and Paul used the same method with the Corinthian fornicator). Discipline here on earth ensures the salvation of the soul in heaven. In heaven, there is eternal joy, and God wipes away every tear from our eyes. God explained this in the story of the construction of Solomon's temple (symbolizing the body of Christ, i.e., the Church in heaven). It was said, "it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built." (1 Kings 6:7). The stones represent believers, and the hammer represents discipline here on earth. They were cutting and shaping the stones in the mountains (1 Kings 5:15-18). God desired for all to be living stones in the temple. But those who resist and persist in their ways, as Pharaoh did, God leaves them to be tools of discipline for His children.

And the meaning of God **hardening** Pharaoh's heart is that He allowed him to remain stubborn. God had the power to prevent Pharaoh from being hardened, for the wise man says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." (Proverbs 21:1). On the other

hand, God's attempts with another king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, succeeded in turning his heart and transforming him into a believer in God (see the introduction to the book of Daniel). God tries with all creation to save everyone who accepts to respond to Him, for "God desires all people to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4).

"And God created all things, for He loves all things. "For You love all things that are, and You hate nothing of the things You have made; for You would not have created or Established anything that You hated." (Wisdom 11:25).

And God did not create anything except with a purpose and a role in this life, and through this work, He glorifies God. As we have seen, God created everything for the glory of His name (Isaiah 43:7). And the God who loves the salvation of all humans wishes that none of His creations would perish. But He continues to strive with every person, so that they may repent, be saved, and become a living stone in the temple of Christ's body, glorifying God.

And whoever resists, He gives him a chance, even many chances, to draw him towards repentance. But these chances are for a specific time, "I gave her time to repent... but I will cast her into a sickbed..." (Revelation 2:21-22), meaning after a certain time, trials and pains begin. But as the rejection, stubbornness, and resistance to the voice of the Holy Spirit continue, and when a person refuses to be a living stone, then he has another role, through which God is glorified. And this is what God means when He says, "**For this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.**" So, God will be glorified through Moses and the saints as they manifest the glory of God in them, and He will also be glorified with the rebellious and the wicked as He manifests His holiness in them and rejects evil and sin.

**Pharaoh:** through his stubbornness, God was glorified by the ten plagues, when the power of Jehovah has revealed, and the insignificance of the pagan gods became apparent. The Egyptians and the Jews knew who God was, and the Jews believed in God and became living stones.

**Satan:** With his stubbornness, he has a role in disciplining the people of God and bringing them back to Him. He became a tool to carve the living stones in order to refine them and make them shine (for example, like Job). In 1 Corinthians 5:5, we find the Apostle Paul delivering a Corinthian adulterer to Satan to destroy the flesh (through diseases or afflictions) and save the spirit on the day of the Lord Jesus. In this way, God is glorified through the salvation of Job and the salvation of this adulterer.

**Judas:** We have seen how many attempts Christ made with him, and Judas' insistence on his stubbornness. And he turned into a tool to carry out the crucifixion of Christ, and thus salvation was accomplished. And through the cross, the Son of God is glorified, and the Father is glorified through the Son.

**Everyone has a role, but everyone in their role glorifies God.**

**Verse (19): "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who can resist His will?'"**

Here is a response to a foolish question that critics may raise: "If God hardens whomever He wills and no one can resist Him, then why do you condemn me, O Lord, when You created me this way?" And we find the Apostle continuing in his style to affirm the freedom of God. The logical answer to the critics' questions is that God did not make Pharaoh or Judas or anyone else hard-hearted, but they, by their own free will, resisted God. God did not change their nature, and God is just and does not show favoritism.

This is the logical response. However, we find the Apostle not using this response, but rather continuing in his style, affirming the absolute sovereignty of God - **who can resist His will.**

**Verse (20): "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?'"**

**The "thing formed"** points to "creation," meaning any created thing. Without a doubt, no one can resist the will of God, and no one has the right to question God and ask Him about His work. But the children of God ask Him with the confidence of love and sonship (Jer12:1).

But who are you? Are you a partner with God in His sovereignty? No, you and I are nothing more than clay formed and shaped by God. So, is it my right to judge God? Indeed, God is like a potter who desires to make all vessels, vessels of honor. But God honors our free will, and if we reject, we remain without honor and lose the sanctified work of His hands in our soul, body, and spirit. For God desires that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). And He says, "Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out" (John 6:37). But whoever insists on remaining a vessel of dishonor, like Pharaoh, God will also glorify Himself through him by displaying His wrath against sin.

**Verse (21): "Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?"**

The concept of the potter and clay vessels is taken from Jeremiah 18:1-10. The point being made here is not that God created me as a vessel for dishonor or glory, but rather that I am clay in the hands of the potter, and he is free to mold me as he pleases. All I have to do is obey and refrain from arguing. However, it is not appropriate to overinterpret the metaphor or take from it anything other than what the apostle intended, which is to reveal the absolute sovereignty of God. But God respects our free will, so if we freely respond to him, he transforms us into vessels of glory, to glorify his name in a marvelous way (Paul the Apostle himself is an example of this). Whoever obeys becomes a vessel of glory. And whoever does not obey becomes a vessel of dishonor. But let us see the love of God, for when God created man from clay for the first time, he made him in his own image (Genesis 1:27). And when God renewed us in Christ, he transformed us into the image of Christ (Colossians 3:10 + Galatians 4:19). The freedom of man to determine his role as a vessel of glory or dishonor is evident in 2 Timothy 2:20-21, where the apostle reveals the absolute sovereignty of God. But we add to that his justice and love.

**Verse (22): "What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction"**

God endured with **much longsuffering** the vessels of wrath, destined for destruction, in order to make known the riches of His glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory. And God endured Pharaoh, who deserved destruction, to display his power before the Jews and the Egyptians. The vessels of destruction serve as a means to display God's wrath, and therefore, reveal his holiness and dissatisfaction with sin. This was evident in the days of the flood, Sodom, and Gomorrah. However, God gives many opportunities to vessels of dishonor, not immediately destroying them, to manifest his mercy, love, and his unwillingness for the death of sinners, such as giving them a chance to repent and live (Ezekiel 18:23). But after giving them multiple chances, he glorifies himself either through their

destruction, revealing God's holiness and rejection of sin, or by giving them an opportunity to respond to God and become saints (Gentiles, Paul the Apostle), or by involving them in the plan of salvation (Judah, Pharaoh).

**Verse (23): "and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory"**

"**And that**": means this verse is connected to its predecessor. The meaning is that God tolerated the wicked for a period of leniency in order to manifest His glory to His people. This is what happened with the rebellious Pharaoh. We find that God tolerated him, but what was the result? The Jews came to know who Yahweh is and the greatness of His power. Moreover, the Egyptians came to realize the futility of their gods. During the days of martyrdom, God tolerated the Romans for a period of leniency and declared His glory through the martyrs, which led the soldiers of the emperors to believe. In fact, the period of martyrdom was a time of growth and expansion of the Church throughout the world.

God reveals the riches of His glory in the Jews, who were vessels of mercy for a long time. He also reveals the riches of His glory in Moses, whose face shone, and in Paul, who saw things that no eye has seen. And in many saints. Notice that it says **vessels of mercy** and not vessels of good works to display the absolute power of God. We can destroy ourselves, but we cannot save ourselves without the mercy of God. Notice the wisdom of our Orthodox Church, which often repeats the phrase "Lord, have mercy." Sinners qualify themselves for hell, but God qualifies the saints for heaven. Certainly, God qualifies for heaven based on what I freely choose. If it were solely the work of God, then everyone would receive glory.

**Verse (24): "even us, whom He also called, not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles."**

Here, the Apostle Paul speaks about the Church, which by God's grace includes both Jews (of whom Paul himself is one) and Gentiles (the people of Rome to whom he is writing), even though the Jewish people as a nation rejected Christ. When he says, "**which he had prepared beforehand for glory**," he means that what he said about vessels of mercy includes the people of the Church from both Jews and Gentiles.

**Verse (25): "As He says also in Hosea: 'I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.'"**

Compare with "I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'" (Hosea 2:23; 1 Peter 2:10). The apostle quoted from the prophet Hosea what he said here (but from the Septuagint translation, it says "Lo-Ruhamah" meaning without mercy). Also, he used "Lo-Ammi" meaning "Not my people". And the apostle means that Hosea prophesied that God would choose the nations, who were not his people, to become his people, and those who were not shown mercy would receive mercy. Paul here is addressing the Jews who reject the acceptance of the nations. As if he is saying "What is your opinion of this statement that Hosea made in your holy book?"



**Verse (26): "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."**

And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," there they shall be called sons of the living God. And there is no need for them to go to Jerusalem, for God will be worshiped in every place. His saying "**in the place**" means every place in the world. This prophecy is taken from Hosea 1:10 which in the Arabic translation says, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God." However, the verse is rendered differently in other translations (such as KJV, NKJV) as mentioned by the Apostle Paul here. The Jews understand the word "place" to refer to the temple in Jerusalem, where worship takes place in one specific location. But from the words of the Lord Jesus to the Samaritan woman, we understand that God will be worshiped in every place.

The term "**place**" in Greek has multiple meanings, and each translator understands it differently. However, comparing the Arabic translation with the English translation, it seems that the meaning intended by the apostle is not geographically intended, such as the temple or Jerusalem according to the understanding of the Jews, or that pagan temples are transformed into churches where God is worshiped according to the above explanation. Rather, the intended "place" is the biblical reference, that is, the verse mentioned by the prophet Hosea. The meaning is that the apostle wants to say to the Jews, "Refer to your holy scriptures, for in the same "**place**" where God said to the nations, '**You are not my people**' in the prophecy of Hosea, in the same prophecy, God gives a promise to the nations that He will show them mercy, as He says, 'Now you are my people, **children of the living God.**'" And this will happen at a time determined by God. So, the "place" here means the verse found in the prophecy of the prophet Hosea. And this interpretation is consistent with what has been mentioned before and what will come later.

**Verse (27): "Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.'"**

The prophecy from Isaiah 10:22-23 (Septuagint). Isaiah prophesied about the return from captivity, but only a few returned from captivity. This is what happened in the time of Christ, where a minority believed in Him, and the majority rejected Him. Here, the apostle refers to those who believed as "the remnant," as Isaiah called them. The remnant may also be a reference to the faith of the Jews in the last days. But the word "remnant" is a clear indication that the church in the Old Testament or the New Testament is one olive tree (Romans 11). After Christ, the branches that rejected faith were cut off, and the believers remained on the olive tree. In the last days, when the remnant believes, they will be grafted back into the same olive tree (the church) after being broken off branches.

**Verse (28): "For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth."**

"**For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness**" (Isaiah 10:23). When God begins a work, He will surely complete it. "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6), whether it is a work of judgment or a work of mercy. Israel deserved condemnation because of their rejection of Christ. However, the God who started with them will also complete with them, saving the remnant and fulfilling His work in

righteousness, which will be accomplished in the end of times. "For the Lord God of hosts will make a determined end In the midst of all the land." refers to the salvation and righteousness that faith brings to all who believe, both Jews and Gentiles, through the spread of the Church throughout the world.

**Verse (29): "And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah."**

This is quoted from Isaiah 1:9. The meaning is: If the Lord had not left us a remnant and had not made among the descendants a righteous chosen offspring = **seed**, we would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah, without any survivors. The word "**seed**" may refer to Christ who came from the Jews to save both Jews and Gentiles. It may also refer to the few who believed in the disciples' message.

**Verse (30): "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith"**

**What shall we say then?** The result of what we have said so far is this: **The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained righteousness, even the righteousness that comes through faith.** They did not strive for righteousness because they did not know and were not aware of their sins before God. They had not heard about God or the law. But they have obtained righteousness through faith in Christ, whom they heard about without hearing about the law. They simply believed that God accepted them. They rejoiced in Him, believed in Him, and through their faith, they became righteous. They did not have any prior experience with the law or good works. They believed in and loved the Savior who came to them, forgave their sins, and they were baptized to unite themselves with Him. They received new lives to walk in righteousness. Christ gave us His life that was raised from the dead, and by this life, our members are used as instruments of righteousness Romans 6. This is how they **attained righteousness**. This is the free grace of God, **the righteousness that comes through faith**. This righteousness is not attained by converting to Judaism first, as the Apostle Peter said, 'He did not discriminate between us and them, for He purified their hearts by faith' (Acts 15:9). In this, we see the faithfulness of God's promises. Those who were not part of His people have become a part of His people and now praise Him as His children.

**Verses (31-33):- "But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."**

"The law of righteousness": God gave the law, and whoever follows its commandments completely becomes righteous. But has anyone been able to abide by all the commandments of the law?!

If anyone looks within themselves, they will find that they are incapable of doing so. This is what the apostles acknowledged in their humility, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). We find the Apostle Paul, in his Jewishness, saying, "concerning the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:6). And after his faith, he says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). Anyone who does this and realizes their inability to fulfill the entire law

looks to God seeking assistance and a Savior to help them. This happened, for example, with King Jehoshaphat when he realized his inability and said, "nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You." (2 Chronicles 20:12). And Solomon, when he became king, acknowledged his inability to lead the people and sought wisdom from God (1 Kings 3:9).

But the reason the Jews became blind and did not realize their weakness is because of their misuse of the law. In their pride, they wanted to prove their righteousness by claiming to be fully committed to the law. They boasted about tithing mint, anise, and cumin (Matthew 23:23). They used the law in the wrong way, wanting to show off and boast about their commitment to the law, without realizing their need for a Savior. In fact, the purpose of the law was for people to recognize their need for the saving Christ, when they discover their weakness and inability. Their pride caused them to miss the purpose of the law. They saw themselves as righteous, but their eyes were blinded from seeing God.

As for the Gentiles, they have believed and loved this Savior who came to them, forgave their sins, and they got baptized to be united in Him and have a righteous life, so they were justified.

**"has not attained the law of righteousness" Why? Because they did it not by faith.** If the Jews had humbled themselves and recognized their inability to keep the law, as the scripture says that God dwells with the humble and contrite heart (Isaiah 57:15), they would have realized their incapacity to fulfill the law. If they had faith in the word of God in the law, they would understand that the law declares that no one can change their nature without divine intervention. As the prophet Jeremiah says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil." (Jeremiah 13:23). This means they are unable to justify themselves. If they had faith in the word of God in the law, they would understand that God promises a coming Savior. Therefore, this means they are in need of this Savior. As long as they are in need of a Savior, how can they claim to have kept the entire law? This blindness is caused by their pride and their unwillingness to acknowledge their weakness and incapacity. We notice that faith is trust in God and thus lifting the heart and eyes to God when feeling the need. But the humble, who have faith in their incapacity and understand that there is a Savior coming, eagerly await the arrival of this Savior. We find Isaiah crying out, saying, "Oh, that you would rend the heavens, That You would come down!" It was the longing of everyone who had faith in the coming Messiah, the awaited Savior. And these humble ones recognized Him when Christ came, for God dwells with the humble (Isaiah 57:15), and He opened their eyes. But the proud, because they marveled at themselves and did not feel their need for God, did not look to God with the eye of faith and trust that He would help them. Consequently, they deprived themselves of knowing their own weakness, and most importantly, their eyes were closed, so they did not recognize Christ and crucified Him. If they had known Christ, they would have understood the law of righteousness as foretold by the prophet Hosea 10:12, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you." If they believed in their own scripture, they would understand that someone would come to teach them the true law of righteousness in a different way than they were accustomed to, and that they were incapable of walking in righteousness without Him.

The problem with the Jews is that they felt they could justify themselves without God. They even boasted in their own righteousness, disregarding their need for God. Whoever can justify themselves without needing God will not feel the need for Him. And this continues until now, and there are examples of this:

1. Whoever says, "I have been able to remain without sin for a long time," their statement of "I" contains pride in themselves. And they fail to realize that they have not fallen due to God's protection over them.

2. He who does a work and feels within himself that he has accomplished something, and takes pride in it, this is what the Lord Christ said about him: "Let your left hand not know what your right hand is doing."

3. The one who feels within himself that he is better off than those around him.

All of these people's problem is that they did not know that it is God who works in them the good work. They thought in themselves that they are something good, separating themselves from God, the source of all righteousness.

On the contrary, the response of Pope Shenouda to a question posed by a presenter, asking him, "Tell us about the works you have done during your papacy," was completely different. His response was, "We are not accustomed to speaking about the works we have done, but rather about the works that God has done through us."

On the other hand, there is something called low self-esteem, and an example of that is: -

Whoever says, "I have no hope in reform, or I am incapable of doing this, so I am weak or helpless," also feels that he is alone without the help of Christ. He does not seek Christ, and when he finds himself helpless, he says that there is no benefit. We notice that pride and low self-esteem are two sides of the same coin, which is separation from God, or that God is out of the picture. But the believer in Christ says:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

"Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10).

"For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You." (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Compare between the Pharisee who hosted Christ (Luke 7) and the sinful woman. The Pharisee felt self-righteousness but gained nothing, while the sinful woman was justified because she acknowledged her sin and her need for Christ.

And consider the words of the Lord Jesus, "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Luke 17:10). Our inner feeling that we are "unprofitable servants" who have done our duty protects us from the pride that is the beginning of the fall. The example used by Jesus about the Pharisee and the tax collector explains the mindset of the Jews. What the Pharisee did is an example that illustrates these verses. Notice what the Pharisee did. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'" (Luke 18:11-13).

And what we mentioned earlier is the fall of Satan, who felt his potential (strength and beauty) apart from God, and the separation from God is a fall into limitedness, which means death, while being connected to God means infinity, which is eternal life. An example of this is the Apostle Paul, who, with his philosophy, knowledge, and discipleship of Gamaliel, was limited before his faith. But after his faith, he became unlimited, as he preached to all of Europe and continues to work to this day.

• The Christian believer always feels the need for God, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink...out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37-39). Also refer to Revelation 3:17. •

Moreover, the believer does not say, "I did this and that," but rather, "Christ arranged this and that," and in this way, the believer continues in union with Christ and embarks on eternity in their work, securing their eternal life. • The believer's eyes are open, and they see themselves as sinful and wrong (Jeremiah 17:9).

• As for the Jews, they did not feel their need for God, but rather felt within themselves that they were righteous. They wanted to prove their righteousness. This is in contrast to what happened with the Gentiles who did not try to prove their righteousness, but simply believed in Christ and were justified. And from them came St. George and St. Anthony. The Jews had the law which was able to lead them to Christ. The purpose of the law is Christ, for those who walk in humility and self-denial. Such individuals discover and know Christ, as happened with the twelve disciples for example. However, the high priest, inflated with his pride and righteousness, did not recognize Christ. But the disciples admitted that they could not keep the law (Acts 15:10), meaning they felt their need for God. As for the arrogant Jews, they did not know the humble Christ, so they stumbled over Him. Indeed, God dwells only with the broken-hearted and the humble (Isaiah 57:15, Psalm 51:17).

**But Israel, who pursued righteousness through the law**, did not succeed in attaining it. The law given by God was **a law of righteousness**, meaning that those who followed it would become righteous. However, the problem with the Jews was that they sought righteousness through the letter of the law, without the spirit. They sought to prove their own righteousness through their works, without humbling themselves before God. They believed that these works would justify them, without adhering to the spirit of the law, which required humility and surrender before God. Because of this, in their sins and pride, when Christ appeared, they did not believe in Him. They were seeking their own self-justification in their pride, rather than seeking the glory of God. Instead, they stumbled upon Him and it became a **stumbling block** for them. If they had truly adhered to the law with their hearts, they would have recognized and believed in Christ when He came to them, just as the disciples did. Although Christ was well-known to the prophets, the Jews, due to their pride, were blinded and stumbled over Him (Isaiah 8:14, 16:28, Luke 2:34, 1 Peter 2:6). But the Rabbis understood that the prophecies of Isaiah regarding the stumbling stone referred to the promised Messiah.

And the Jews, despite their efforts to pursue the law of righteousness, **did not attain the law of righteousness**. They were unable to even abide by the law. **Why? Because they pursued it not by faith. Faith** is trust in God and therefore lifting the heart and eyes to God when feeling the need. To understand this, let us remember the story of Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:28-32). He was able to walk on water when he kept his gaze fixed on Christ, but he sank when he looked at himself and the waves, doubting. But when he cried out, Jesus rescued him. His cry was an acknowledgment that he needed Christ. So, the Jews, in their obedience to the commandments of the law, were looking at themselves to prove that they were capable of obeying the law, seeking approval in their own eyes and the eyes of others. Therefore, they never felt the need for God to help them abide by the law. If they were honest with themselves, they would have felt their need for God's assistance and would have lifted their eyes to God, seeking His help. Those who seek in faith lift their eyes to God, and if they had done so, they would have understood their need for a Savior. But in their pride, their eyes were on themselves rather than on God. They deceived themselves, thinking that they did not need assistance, but rather, they wanted to stand before God as righteous, asking for their reward. On the other hand, King Jehoshaphat did not act this way when he felt weak and said to God, "Nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (2 Chronicles 20:12). Therefore, among the Jews, there were those who understood the spirit of the law and realized that they were in need of God.

And all those who humbled themselves before God felt their need and in their weakness were unable to adhere to the law and commandments (Acts 15:10-11). And those who humbled themselves and felt their need for a Savior, when they saw Christ, they discovered Him and believed in Him, saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68-69). With the coming of Christ, the era of the Jews and the works of the law ended, and faith in the cornerstone and the rock of ages began. But the Jews rejected faith stubbornly, refusing righteousness with mercy, and continued to work to establish their own righteousness. By falling on the cornerstone (Christ), they stumbled, and their glory was shattered. They challenged Him and crucified Him, only to fall beneath the stone and be crushed. However, those who accepted Him discovered the new path that ascends to heaven. For Christ is the promised seed of Abraham, in whom the choice is concentrated, just as the rejection is concentrated.

**"Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame."** This means that anyone who comes to God acknowledging their need for Him in faith, God will give them righteousness and not shame them, but rather transform them into a saint. And anyone among the Jews who lived by the Spirit of humility, realizing that the law demands purity and that every person incapable of it feels the need for someone to deliver them from their impurity, anyone who lived in this way among the Jews recognized Christ. On the other hand, the self-righteous high priest who seeks righteousness for himself did not discover Christ, but crucified Him, because he did not seek the righteousness of God, which God gives, but rather sought righteousness for himself and stumbled over Christ. In general, these are two opposing paths that cannot meet: the righteousness of God and self-righteousness. God gives His righteousness to those who acknowledge their need and ask for it. But someone who is self-satisfied will not ask, and such a person will not discover Christ.

**Why? Because he did it not by faith, but as if it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled over the stumbling stone** = The Jews sought to fulfill the commandments of the law = **works of the law** in order to stand before God **asking for reward**, just like the Pharisee, and they stood before people seeking praise and honor. "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:42-44). In their pride, they did not comprehend the humility of God. So, when Christ came in humility, they had a stumbling stone and did not recognize Him. If someone comes to them in the name of Christ in the end times in his pride, they will believe in him, for he will be a reflection of what is in their inflated hearts. If these people understood the spirit of the law, they would have known the humble nature of God and would have known Christ in his humility as his simple disciples knew him.

# Chapter Ten

## **Introduction.**

Before delving into the explanation of this chapter, we need to remember the meanings of some phrases:

**1) "Righteousness of the Law"** = whoever adheres to all the commandments of the Law is justified according to the Law, meaning they become righteous. According to the Law's statement, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 18:5). However, there is a problem here, which is that no one has been able to fully comply with the entire Law. This is acknowledged by Saint Peter in the Council of Jerusalem, as he said, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples (this was the label which was used to call those who have believed in Christ in the early days; Acts 1, 2, 7) which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). The Apostle Paul attributed the failure of man to fully adhere to all the commandments of the Law to original sin and the fact that man have inherited a weak nature, which the Apostle Paul referred to as "the old man."

And because no man has kept the entirety of the law, death has reigned over all mankind since everyone sinned. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12)

**2) "Righteousness of God"** = This phrase can be understood to mean "God is righteous." This is how Jesus addressed the Father, saying "Righteous Father" (John 17:25). It means that God is just in His judgments and righteous in His promises. Every promise that God has given, He has fulfilled. It is worth noting that in the Hebrew language, the words "righteous" and "just" are the same word.

But the Apostle Paul used this expression to explain that God found a way for us to be justified, as we were unable to fully comply with all the commandments of the Law to justify ourselves. And this was through the salvation of Christ. Therefore, Christ said to John the Baptist, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15). And this is what the Apostle Paul says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, the meaning of the righteousness of God is that God is the one who offered salvation through Christ so that we become a new creation in Christ through baptism, and we have the life of Christ, and by the life of Christ in us, we walk in righteousness. The Holy Spirit assists us with His grace. The Holy Spirit renews our nature so that we walk in righteousness, meaning that we are capable of complying with all the commandments of the Law with ease. "Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). But let us pay attention to the Apostle's statement that we must strive (explaining the concept of strife in point 7). God wants to justify us, but He does not force us to do anything we do not want to do, for He created us in His image as free beings. Therefore, He asks each one of us, "Do you want to be made well?" And whoever asks God for help, God gives him the grace to walk in righteousness.

## **3) God's righteousness through Christ.**

When God found that all humans had perished and that all creation had been corrupted, the

solution was to create a new creation by creating a new human. The old creation had to die, but how would that happen?

God's eternal plan was to send His Only Begotten Son to renew the creation. Truly, through His redemption, Christ offered forgiveness for our sins "... and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7). But this is not the only thing that Christ offered to humanity (refer to the article "Why was Christ incarnate?" at the end of the letter to the Colossians).

For Christ died and rose again, and the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ in baptism in His death, so that the old nature dies and a new creation arises within us, having eternal life which is the life of Christ (Romans 6). In baptism, the Holy Spirit establishes us in Christ, so that we may have the life of Christ. Through His life in us, Christ enables us to walk in righteousness. He uses our members as instruments of righteousness, and the Holy Spirit assists and supports us with grace. And whoever does not walk in righteousness, the Holy Spirit convicts him (John 16:8).

There was no hope that the old creation, or what Paul the Apostle called "the old man," would adhere to the law, as this creation became corrupted, weakened, and prone to sin. God saw that this old creation must die and a new creation should rise, with new potential aided by the Holy Spirit, which Paul the Apostle called "grace." This is the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us in the sacrament of Chrismation and helps in our weaknesses (Romans 8:26). However, this grace does not work with those who are negligent and do not strive for their salvation, but with those who struggle. We will soon see what the required struggle is.

4) Self-righteousness: This is the fundamental problem of the Jews, as in their pride, they refused to acknowledge their failure to abide by the Law. They misunderstood God's purpose for the Law – God wanted them to attempt to follow the Law to the best of their ability, and the result would be a life filled with as much joy as possible. If they were honest with themselves, they would have realized their weakness and inability to fully comply with all the commandments of the Law, and their need for a Savior. However, they were attempting to fulfill the commandments of the Law in order to boast before God and people that they were strictly adhering to every letter. They would "tithing mint, dill, and cumin..." (Matthew 23:23). They sought glory from each other, rather than seeking the glory that comes for God (John 5:44, John 12:43, Romans 2:17-19, Matthew 23 in its entirety). Instead, they stood before God, reminding Him of their righteousness, seeking reward just as the Pharisee did, who stood before God to boast about his righteousness and belittled the tax collector (Luke 18:10-13). In their pursuit of their own righteousness and self-centeredness, it was natural for them not to see their own sins since they only wanted to appear righteous. Thus, they missed the true purpose of the Law, which was to wait for the Messiah, the Savior, who would help them in their weakness. So, when Christ came, they did not recognize Him, as they only saw themselves.

As long as they are in their pride, considering themselves complete, they become like patients who do not realize that they are sick and do not go to the doctor. The Lord of Glory spoke about them when they criticized Him for eating with tax collectors and sinners, saying, "When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous (meaning those who feel that they are righteous whereas they are not), but sinners, to repentance." (Mark 2:17). And whoever feels within themselves that they do not need Christ, the Lord of Glory says about them, "I will vomit you out of My mouth... because you say, 'I am rich... and have need of nothing'" (Revelation 3:16-17).

#### **5) The role of the Law in the Old Testament.**

The Apostle Paul said about the Law that it "was our tutor to bring us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24).



So, the person in the Old Testament longed for sin, but they refrained from sin out of fear of punishment and were in a state of suppression. But as Saint Gregory said in his liturgy, "You have given me the law as a help." Originally, God intended the commandments to be engraved in the heart, and not to be broken by man out of love for God and trust in Him, knowing that God gave them to preserve him from all evil and calamity. However, after man broke God's commandment, the heart became hardened with the spread of sin. Therefore, God gave the Law written on stone tablets to symbolize the hardened heart of man who no longer knew the commandments. The Law was temporary until Christ came. Pay attention to the prophecy of the prophet Hosea, "Sow for yourselves righteousness (do righteous deeds, this is positive striving). Reap in mercy (a better life for those who adhere to the commandments). Break up your fallow ground (search within yourselves for any obstructing sin and repent from it), for it is time to seek the Lord, till He (Christ) comes and rains righteousness on you" (Hosea 10:12).

#### **6) Righteousness in the New Testament.**

But after the redemption of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, the Holy Spirit poured out the love of God into our hearts (Romans 5:5). And when the love of God returned to our hearts, the commandment was imprinted in the heart as God intended from the beginning. This is what God meant in His promise of the New Covenant through the prophet Jeremiah, "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jeremiah 31:31-33). And this concept is what the Lord Jesus Christ referred to when He said, "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23). Notice the words of the Lord, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). For through baptism, the old creation dies, and a new creature arises. However, the freedom of man can lead him to fall again. Therefore, God gave the sacrament of chrismation, which is the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the baptized. The Spirit continues to work in man to renew his nature. The entrance is through faith, then baptism, then the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Christian becomes a new creation, rejecting sin freely without restraint, as he is cleansed from within, as St. Peter said at the Council of Jerusalem about the Gentiles, "purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). And the Apostle Paul said in the same sense that the blood of Christ cleanses our hearts, "For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins." (Hebrews 10:2) + "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (baptism)" (Hebrews 10:22). Notice here that justification and purity come without restraint, as the heart and conscience are cleansed by the blood of Christ, and the love of God is in the heart. The rejection of sin comes from within. Man becomes willing to do righteousness, not by restraint. This is what made the Apostle say in Hebrews 12:1 that we must strive, and with ease we can overcome sin and walk in righteousness. The ease is attributed to the new creation, the life of Christ in us, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, and the work of the Holy Spirit that helps us (grace).

As for the person of the Old Covenant, they struggled to obey the law to the best of their ability, eagerly awaiting the righteousness of God through Christ. This was expressed by the prophet

Hosea when he said, "Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you." (Hosea 10:12). In other words, strive with yourselves until Christ comes, who will give you a new creation and the grace that brings about internal change. This is the righteousness of the New Covenant, or rather, the righteousness of God through the redemption of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, which teaches you.

And it was not only Hosea who prophesied about Christ, but the entire Old Testament. Isaiah, after seeing the salvation in Christ, cried out, saying, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!" (Isaiah 64:1). These prophets, filled with the Spirit, were contrite and aware of their weakness, longing for the coming of the Savior, Christ. This is the meaning of the angel's statement in the book of Revelation, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). And the meaning of the spirit of prophecy, linguistically, is that with every breath they took, they desired to see the salvation that is in Christ, meaning that the coming of this Savior is the hope by which they live.

And so it was that the humble disciples recognized and believed in Christ. As for the arrogant Jews, they refused to acknowledge their weakness and did not realize the need for a Savior to save them spiritually. They rejected Christ and did not feel the need for God or seek His help. Their longing was solely for a temporal savior who would restore earthly kingship to satisfy their pride and arrogance.

#### **7) So what is the required strife?**

1) We have died with Christ in baptism, and all we need to understand is that whoever is baptized has died to their old nature, but they must be convinced of this. They should stand as dead to sin, and this is what we call negative strife (see introduction + Rom 6). Those who do not turn back to awaken their old man will find grace supporting them. Therefore, all the required negative strife is for us to stand as dead to the sin that is in the world, and this is what we call "mortification". This is exactly what the Apostle Paul said, "always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). He also said, "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:11). He also said, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire..." (Colossians 3:5). And whoever does this forcibly will find the help of the Holy Spirit persuading them to do it freely and willingly.

2) Keeping the commandment and this is what we call positive strife. And whoever decides to commit will find assistance from the divine grace (refer to the introduction).

3) In Christianity, strife means striving to forcefully do what is right. This is the teaching of Christ, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." (Matthew 11:12). The body tends towards laziness, and the old man nature tends towards evil. However, those who strive to forcefully do good find assistance through grace. Thus, the required strife is that we forcefully restrain ourselves and stand as dead before sin, and forcefully commit ourselves to fulfilling the commandments, and here we find the grace assisting us in both cases. The meaning of forceful striving here is that God has not taken away our freedom. Those who make the effort will find assistance. However, there will remain in the body (as long as we are in the body), sinful desires, which the fathers called "the rebellions of the body." But these desires are subdued with the growth and increase of grace. They will only come to an end with the death of the body, which is what made the Apostle Paul say, "O

wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). For the Apostle Paul longed for the complete joy, which can only happen through the death of every sinful desire in the body.

**Verse (1):- "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved."**

In Romans 9:1-3, we see the Apostle Paul saddened for them, but sorrow alone is not enough to bring the sinner back. Therefore, we see the Apostle here praying for them, despite their stubbornness, so that they may obtain salvation. Paul's love for his people and his prayers for them did not cease, despite their continuous attacks against him. He resembled Samuel when he said, "far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23).

**Verse (2): "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."**

There is jealousy for God, but not according to knowledge. For there are those who kill the people of God, thinking that they are serving God (John 16:2). Even Paul himself fell into this error before (Acts 9:1), and anyone with a narrow-minded, biased thinking, without an expansive heart in love for others, falls into this as well. It is worth noting that Paul testifies to them, his fiercest enemies, as the Lord said, "Bless your enemies." And its meaning is to mention our enemies with the best qualities in them. "**Knowledge**" = They apply the law out of jealousy for God, but to prove their own righteousness and not to glorify and please God. If they did, they would feel the weight of the law, as St. Peter did (Acts 15:10), and they would be humbled, acknowledging their need for help from God and their need for a Savior. We find that the prophets, filled with the Spirit, felt this, and longed for the coming of the Christ (Isaiah 64:1). Likewise, the simple, humble disciples rejoiced in Christ and clung to Him.

**Verse (3): "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God."**

"**Establish their own righteousness**" = They did not recognize the work of God in them and that God is the one who justifies. They thought they were capable of this on their own. "**have not submitted to the righteousness of God**" = This does not mean that God is righteous, but rather the righteousness that God bestows upon humans, making them righteous through the life of Christ within them. The life of Christ in us uses our members as instruments of righteousness, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Their attempt to prove their righteousness is derived from their pride, which is their internal corruption. When the ego swells and fills the heart, it cannot bear anything else within it. Even when they practice religious rituals, they do so for their own closed selves, seeking to establish their own righteousness instead of expanding it through love to accept God's grace and the gift of righteousness through faith. They believed that righteousness and goodness came from

themselves and not as a divine gift. That is why **they did not submit to God's righteousness** because they did not seek it, as they were arrogant. This resembles what the Lord Jesus Christ said, "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). In their self-reliance, they despised grace, so when Christ came, they did not believe in Him. They sought their own righteousness and glory (John 5:42, 44) and lost their love for God, therefore God to forsook them (Romans 1:28, 2 Chronicles 15:1, 2). **"have not submitted to the righteousness of God"** = The righteousness of God, which, as we have seen in the introduction, can be divided into:

- 1) The death and resurrection of Christ, and this is what He accomplished and completed.
- 2) Baptism: Christ was baptized in the Jordan to have the Holy Spirit work with the baptized in the sacrament of baptism, uniting them with Christ in His death and resurrection, so that they may have a new creation. That is why Christ said to John the Baptist when He went to be baptized, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Christ, through His baptism, instituted the sacrament of baptism in which we are united with Him and receive His life, enabling us to walk in righteousness.
- 3) To live the life of mortification, and in this we are aided by grace. The life of mortification requires us to submit ourselves forcefully, so that we may find the assistance of grace. And thus, we can freely say with the Apostle Paul, "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (Romans 8:36).
- 4) In order for the grace to work in us and for the old person to die completely, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This requires striving and earnestly seeking the Holy Spirit, along with continuous praise from the heart and a constant sense of need, as the Lord said, "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." ". But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive" (John 7:37-39). Also, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord..." (Ephesians 5:18-21). Additionally, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13).  
And as for the Jews, all of this does not apply to them because they do not feel the need due to their pride and self-righteousness. Therefore, they did not believe in Christ in the first place. They want a Messiah who satisfies their pride, not a humble Messiah. That is why the Lord of glory said to them, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name (proud and arrogant), him you will receive." (John 5:43).

**Verse (4): "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."**

The law was given to prepare the way for Christ and to work on His behalf, so that humanity may realize their weakness and need for a Savior because man is unable to fulfill the commandments of the law (Acts 10:15). Jeremiah the prophet expressed man's inability to justify himself, saying, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" (Jeremiah 13:23). David also expressed this by saying, "In sin my mother conceived me."

This is how the disciples felt. And this was the work of the prophets when they prophesied about the coming of the Savior. The law was not given to remain, but to work for the sake of Christ. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10). So, when Christ comes, the law

will have reached its purpose and its end. The law was given so that when the Jews use it with faith, meaning with the right relationship with God, it will inevitably lead them to spiritual enlightenment and prepare their minds to accept the Christ who justifies those who believe in Him. **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.** Which means Because the purpose of the law is Christ for righteousness' sake. Meaning, it reveals man's need for Christ, so he goes to Him, and whoever does so by faith, Christ justifies them. However, they misused the law and wanted to prove their own righteousness, not for the glory of God. That's why they rejected Christ and crucified Him. The law does not justify, but it leads to Christ who justifies those who believe. Also, if they had submitted to the law correctly, without pride but with the humility of one recognizing the reality of their sin and weakness, they would have known God in a proper way. If they knew the Father, they would have known the Son and accepted Christ. This is what the Lord of glory said to them, "My Father is the one who glorifies me... and you do not know Him" (John 8:55) + "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also" (John 8:19).

**Verse (5): "For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."**

Moses writes about the justification that comes through the law and the works of the Mosaic law, saying: "The person who fulfills all the commandments of the law will live, and only he can be justified" (Leviticus 18:5). However, it is impossible and impracticable to fully keep the law due to the corruption of human nature. Who can refrain from coveting what belongs to their neighbor (the tenth commandment)? This can only be applied by those who have died to the world with Christ and have renounced the world entirely. The entrance to this death with Christ is through faith in Him, and this is the way to God's righteousness.

**Verses (6-9): "But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above). or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):. that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."**

In verse 5, the Apostle talks about the difficulty of salvation through the works of the Law, and here he speaks about faith to establish that the path of faith is easier than the path of works and the Law. In fact, the demands of the New Testament seem at first glance much harder than the demands of the Old Testament. The Old Testament advises against adultery, while the New Testament prohibits even looking with lust. However, by simply having faith and attempting to fulfill the commandments, we will find assistance and divine work that justifies us. And this was impossible in the Old Testament, which condemns the sinner, while in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit assists the believer.

In these verses, we find that the Apostle Paul rephrased what Moses the prophet said: "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'. "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea

for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'. But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). Paul elaborated on these verses with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand them in the context of the New Covenant. Moses intended to say to his people, "Do not say that the commandment is difficult or that it is in heaven, and we cannot reach it, or that it is across the sea, and we cannot travel far to it." This is what God said to Cain about sin, "And you shall rule over it." However, practically speaking, we saw that human weakness prevented us from fully implementing the Law, so the Law appeared difficult to us. Paul looked at himself when he was a Jew and indeed saw the difficulty of fulfilling the commandment. He wondered how Moses could say that the commandment is easy. Then he looked at himself in his new life as a Christian and found that he easily adheres to the commandment. He realized that the reason is his faith in Christ, which made the implementation of the commandment easy. Therefore, the Apostle Paul understood that when Moses spoke of the ease of the commandment, he was actually prophesying about Christ, who died in His body to give me the ability to die and rise with Him through baptism. Now, I fulfill the commandment because the Holy Spirit has given me the ability to die with Christ to sin and to rise with Him to live a righteous life. This is what we call grace (the power that supports us in fulfilling the commandment). This is what Christ asked us to bear His yoke, meaning to be united with Him, "Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy" (Matthew 11:29-30) (meaning to accept to adhere to the commandment). And whoever accepts and tries to fulfill the commandment will find it easy because Christ in reality is the one who bears the burden of implementing the commandment. Whoever accepts to be united with Christ in the yoke of fulfilling the commandment finds that the life mortification is easy and that fulfilling the commandment is easy because Christ in him. Now is the work of both the death and the life. John saw Him in his vision as a Lamb standing (signifying the act of life) as if it had been slain (signifying the act of death) (Revelation 5:6). Whoever accepts to be united with Him performs in himself the act of Christ's death in the body of Adam, making it easier for him to live a life of mortification, as Paul the Apostle said, "For your sake we are killed all day long" (Romans 8:36). And he performs in himself the act of the life of the resurrected Christ, making it easier for him to fulfill the commandments and live in holiness.

The Apostle Paul saw in the words of Moses that the commandment is a symbol of Christ. For Christ is the fulfillment of the law, and the law, in its ultimate purpose, is the manifestation of Christ's person. Thus, Paul removed the word "commandment" from the verses of Deuteronomy and replaced it with "Christ, the provider of righteousness". Simply put, it is impossible to fulfill the commandment except for those who are steadfast in Christ. It is impossible to fulfill the commandment "do not covet" except for those who have died with Christ or in Christ and risen with Him to a new life in reality. The commandment "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself" can only be fulfilled by those who are steadfast in Christ. The Apostle says that being steadfast in Christ has become easier after the death, resurrection, and sending of the Holy Spirit, Who establishes us in Christ. Thus, the fulfillment of the commandment becomes easier through the life of Christ within us. This is the meaning of the words of Jesus: "He who has my commands and keeps them, it is he who loves Me" (John 14:21-23). This means that those who are steadfast in Him are able to fulfill the commandment. The love of Christ points to union with Him (John 15:9-10).

The crossing of the sea was understood by the Apostle Paul as the death of Christ since the depths of the sea symbolize hades and the place of the dead. He said that Christ did not remain dead, but rather He rose, and therefore He gave me the ability not to remain defeated by sin and

death. Just as the resurrection from death became possible through the resurrection of Christ, we should not find it difficult to connect with Christ after His ascension. His ascension to heaven does not mean separation from us, but rather He ascended to give us His life so that we may live through it. Therefore, the ease of the commandment is now attributed to the death and resurrection of Christ. We die with Him and then rise with Him to receive His life and walk in righteousness. All that is required of us is to believe and then decide to be crucified with Christ, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). **"Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" meaning to bring Christ.** As in, there is no need to imagine that Christ must be physically present among us for us to fulfill the commandment. Christ truly ascended, but He gave us His life to live through it in our words, actions, emotions, and feelings. Christ sent the Law through a servant, but as for grace He came by Himself for to bring it. He came to give us the power of His resurrection working within us, and for righteousness to dwell in us, so that our righteousness may surpass that of the Pharisees. The Christian, as a child of Abraham through faith, believes that Christ is able to raise him from the death of sin and give him a life rooted in Christ. The Holy Spirit, Who inspired Moses with what he said, is the one Who interpreted and explained what was said to Paul. Paul took Moses' words and gave them a biblical touch to show that there is no need for us to ascend to heaven nor to die and descend to the depths of Hades, for this is what Christ has done to justify us.

In verse 9, **"If you"** the accurate translation is: "If it" This verse refers back to **the word of faith that is preached** in verse 8. What is the word of faith that is proclaimed by the apostles = **"confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart"**. The heart signifies our inner life, while the mouth signifies our outward life. Our faith touches the depths of our inner being and our outward actions. Faith is the gateway to righteousness, sanctification, and glory. Without the heart, our confession becomes mere words, militant, and superficial. Without a life of active faith and visible confession, our faith becomes dead (James 2:17), and we do not partake in the reward. Confessing with the mouth is our Lord Jesus Christ referred to saying "whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess"... Confession here is not just with words, but in life and actions. (Matthew 5:16). Indeed, even unto death, confession becomes the price for this testimony, as the martyrs have shown. It is important to note that no one can testify for Christ unto death if they do not have a Christian life in holiness and love for God. They must be willing to offer themselves as a living sacrifice and crucify their flesh along with lusts and desires. (Galatians 5:24). Here, the life we live aligns with the faith in our hearts. Confessing with the mouth means that the name of Christ fills our mouths, and no other name is exalted above it. The name of Christ sanctifies our life and our speech, so that there is no reverence except for Christ, no fear except of Him, no hope but in Him, and no desire except for Him. This equals the idea that we have died with Christ and have risen with Him. This is salvation **if we confess and believe we are saved**. And in verse 8, **"and in your heart,"** this is the work of the Holy Spirit Who pours out love in our hearts (Romans 5:5), enabling us to keep the commandments.

**If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** " This is the hymn of the Church in the Divine Liturgy, **"Your death, O Lord, we proclaim, and Your Holy resurrection. . . we confess.** **"If you confess with your mouth"**, this refers to our outward life before people, which is considered our witnessing. We testify for Christ in it by offering ourselves as living sacrifices in love for Him, as it says, "For Your sake we are killed all day long" (Romans 8:36). And this extends to death in martyrdom (the words "witness" and "martyrdom" are originally the same

word in Greek, and there is a clear correlation in Arabic). And the Church praises, "**Your death, O Lord, we proclaim.**"

**Believing in your heart that God raised Him** = What motivates a person to accept offering themselves as a sacrifice and to die daily? It is faith in the resurrection of Christ, through which we will rise in His second coming to eternal life and eternal glory. And this is the same hymn of the Church, "**And your Holy resurrection... we confess.**"

**Verse (10): "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."**

The Apostle is speaking here about living faith. Intellectual or theoretical faith alone is not sufficient for salvation. It is necessary for this kind of faith to be manifested in works that glorify the name of God.

**"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness"** means that the first step toward justification is faith. The meaning is that you will be justified because, with your heart, if you believe, you will attain the righteousness that is the fruit of this faith, because Christ will be in your heart, transforming our members from serving sin to serving God. Faith of the heart is the dedication of the self (mind and will), and **"with the mouth confession is made"** means through prayer, praise, and confessing before people a life of holiness and dying to sin. This is the consecration of the body. It also means that through your life, you confess Christ, or rather, the "life of Christ in you," and it means confessing with the mouth the good works that arise from the life of Christ within us.

The dedication of the self or the faith of the heart means the submission of the mind and the will, with sincere inward obedience. And the consecration of the body, which is the confession of the mouth, means that my bodily members have become instruments of righteousness. This total dedication of the self and the body is the path of justification and salvation, and righteousness is attributed to faith. Faith is the entrance to justification, but faith can be dead, and we do not complete the journey to salvation. Faith is made alive when there is work. Therefore, works are attributed to salvation, and the mouth confesses Him.

**Verse (11): "For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'"**

It is quoted from Isaiah 28:16 (Septuagint). The meaning is that you will receive salvation because the Scripture says, **"Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame."** This means that salvation will be realized for those who believe, as through the works of the law, we can be put to shame since we are unable to justify ourselves. However, living faith will not bring shame. Notice the use of the term **"whoever"** (all) indicating the universality of salvation. So why do the Jews reject the Gentiles when their own Scriptures point to their salvation? **"Not be put to shame"** means that those who believe in Christ will receive glory and eternal life. As for those who rely on the law as a means of salvation, they will be put to shame because there has not been, nor will ever be one has been able to fully comply with the law.

The verse in the Arabic translation of the Book of Isaiah says, "Whoever believes in Him will not flee." Isaiah spoke these words after prophesying about the Assyrian attack on the people of God as a form of discipline. Then Isaiah directly prophesies about the coming of the Messiah, the



cornerstone, and that whoever believes in Him will not flee. The Jews understood this to mean that the righteous ones have no need to flee from the pain of the Assyrian attack because God will not put them to shame.

Indeed, the Apostle Paul understood the prophecy as referring to Christ and that whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame. Many Jewish rabbis also understood the prophecy of the cornerstone to be about the awaited Messiah.

The word **will not flee** carries the meaning being in a hurry. It means to hastily seek an escape or to eagerly pursue something for enjoyment or excitement. The Septuagint translation renders it as "will not be put to shame." This is how the Apostle Paul also used it in Romans 10:11. Based on the above, the intended meaning becomes clearer. Whoever believes in the crucified and rejected Christ does not flee from hardship or distress. Christ will not put them to shame. Instead, their attachment and reliance on Him will grow, in the midst of increasing pain.

Indeed, anyone who does not rush after the pleasures of the world, seeking Christ, will not be put to shame by Christ. He compensates those who give up anything for His sake a hundredfold.

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29)

**Verses (12-13): "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'"**

"**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek**" refers back "**whoever**" (all) in the previous verse, where the Apostle addresses their rejection of God's all-encompassing love for all, both Jews and Gentiles. He states that God is the Lord of all, the Creator of all, so He is responsible for all. Therefore, He will accept everyone, anyone who believes, whether they are Jews or Greeks. The Apostle Paul also relies on another verse from Joel, "**whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved**" (Joel 2:32). Of course, no one will call on the Lord if they do not first believe and then call upon His name. So, the promise in Joel applies to everyone as well, to everyone who prays in faith to the Lord.

**Verses (14-15): "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'"**

The Apostle directs blame towards the Jews and exposes their shortcomings. It was expected that they would be the light to the world, being the chosen people and having knowledge of the Lord. Moreover, by their knowledge of the Lord first, they should have been ambassadors to the entire world, fulfilling the role of proclaimers and declaring God to them. However, due to their pride and self-righteousness, they engaged in futile arguments with arrogance and pride against the Gentiles. They became a stumbling block for the nations and the reason for their aversion towards God. They prevented these nations from having faith and hindered their possibility of

salvation. The Apostle Paul turns their rejection of the Gentiles into a serious charge against them. They became an obstacle that hindered the faith of the nations and the salvation of souls, thus preventing the name of God from being glorified. If they had understood the meaning of Joel's prophecy, "**whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved,**" they would have understood that it applied to every person, even the Gentiles. They would have carried out the mission of proclaiming the name of God, and thus glorifying it through the faith of the nations. Now, God has come to accept the Gentiles, while the Jews reject it, even though the faith of the Gentiles in God should bring them joy. Because the name of God is to be glorified in the world, if they truly loved God, but they loved themselves instead. This is what was meant by them seeking their own righteousness. With their knowledge of the law, which testifies to Christ, they were capable of discovering Him and preaching Him to the nations. However, due to their pride they did not fulfill their role that God wanted for them.

**"How then shall they call on Him"** = This refers back to verse 13 **"all who call upon Him"** The Apostle Paul questions how the Gentiles can call on God and be saved **if they have not believed** in Him, and in order to believe in Him, they need to **hear about Him**. This did not happen because there was no **preacher** to make them aware of God so that they could believe in Him and call on His name for salvation. Here, the Apostle blames the Jews. As they had prior knowledge of God, they were supposed to be the first believers in Christ and proclaim Him to the whole world. Instead, they closed their ears even to the prophecies of their own prophets. They did not recognize or believe in Christ, nor did they proclaim Him. **"unless they are sent"** = The Holy Spirit did not send them through the Church to preach. How can someone serve as an ambassador without proper credentials? The king does not send an ambassador unless they are qualified for the role. God did not send them for preaching because of their pride. The Apostle also refers to the legal service that requires a servant to be appointed in a legal manner. The one who sends the servants is the Lord of the harvest, but He leaves it to the leaders of the Church to judge their abilities and qualifications. It is not left for each individual to decide for themselves. This is to maintain the order of the Church, as those who are given authority (God has given authority to the Church) are the ones to establish the servants, and thus, the Church preserves the apostolic succession. Therefore, when God chose Paul and Barnabas for preaching, the Church laid hands on them to send them (Acts 13:2-3). When the Jews lost their role as proclaimers among the nations, they lost the blessings of being **"those who preach the gospel of peace"** (Isaiah 52:7). This verse was originally said about the salvation of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, but Paul saw a deeper meaning in it. He believed it referred to those who proclaim the peace that was achieved through the blood of Christ between God and humanity. Thus, anyone who proclaims Christ also proclaims peace, for Christ is the King of peace.

**"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach"** = in the eyes of those who believe in their preaching. But the Jews, in their stubbornness, have lost these blessings.

**Verse (16): "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'"**

The disbelief of the Jews in Christ, as prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (53:1), only a few believed and had faith. **"They have not all obeyed the gospel"** = It is not enough to hear and know, but to obey. **"Who has believed our report?"** = Those who believe in the message of the proclamation. for the Jews heard the words of Christ's proclamation and the words of His

apostles' proclamation, but they did not obey.

**Verse (17): "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."**

**"So then faith comes by hearing"** = In English, "hearing" means listening. And the word "hearing" here refers to the word "our report" in the previous verse. The meaning is that one must listen to the word of God in order to believe. The beginning and growth of faith come from hearing, specifically hearing the word of God. And since the "report" is the word of God, whoever rejects the word that the apostles preached is rejecting God. Here, the Apostle accuses the Jews of : 1) Rejecting and resisting the word of the gospel. 2) Failing to fulfill their role in delivering this gospel to the nations.

**Reflection:** There are many good news, promises from our heavenly God, not only regarding our heavenly inheritance, but also concerning His protection, care, and provision for every aspect of our lives on earth. And we live to experience the truth of these appointments, the truth of this news. The more we see and experience the truth of these appointments, our faith in God increases. Thus, the statement in the verse **"faith comes by hearing"** is fulfilled.

**Verse (18): "But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.'"**

But I say, have the Jews not heard the word of God? Surely, they have heard. The sound of the preachers proclaiming the gospel of salvation has spread and reached all the earth. And the words of the proclamation have reached the ends of the world. So, Paul here affirms to the Jews that they have no excuse for rejecting the word, but they are hearers who do not understand (Matthew 13:13). And the Apostle Paul quoted from Psalm 19:5. However, the psalm was talking about the testimony of the heavens and nature to God, as the planets with their marvelous order proclaim the existence of God. But Paul understood the psalm to be about the testimony of the apostles and their proclamation that reached the ends of the world (Mark 16:15, Matthew 28:19). Just as God ordained for His works to be proclaimed in creation through the sun, moon, and planets, He has now ordained for the works of redemption and His love to be proclaimed to the whole world through the proclamation of the apostles. That is why the apostles are called "planets."

**Verse (19): "But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.'"**

He means that Israel heard and knew. But he did not want to understand because the nations heard, understood, and believed. It was fitting for the Jews, who had the prophets and the signs, to understand. And God provokes them by accepting the nations in the hope that they may return and believe. So, God did not close the door to the Jews. But the stubbornness of the Jews caused them to lose their status as a nation, and the gentiles took their place. Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32:21, where Moses says, **"I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."** This means that the nations were

foolish in clinging to idols, and no matter how wise the pagan nations may be, they are far from God, and their wisdom is foolishness. And we see the jealousy of the Jews in accepting the nations in Acts 13:45, 17:5, 17:13, 22:22. The Jews were like the older brother who was annoyed at the return of his younger brother, the prodigal son.

**Verse (20): "But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.'"**

Isaiah, who was a Jew and despised idol worship, boldly speaks on behalf of the Lord. "**I was sought by those who did not ask for Me**" (Isaiah 65:1-3) means that I became a God to the nations. Here, Isaiah prophesies about the acceptance of the nations.

**Verse (21): "But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.'"**

Continuing with the prophecy of Isaiah (1:65-3): Here we see that God stretches out His hands **all day long**, meaning He continuously extends His love and mercy as a jealous and compassionate Father, seeking to embrace this people. However, they have rejected Him. "**I have stretched out My hands**" also contains a reference to the cross, where Christ stretched out His hands, seeking reconciliation and desiring to embrace all, calling out to those who would respond. "**All day long**" signifies that time is limited. The day is followed by night, and the night symbolizes God's anger (see John 13:30 where the Bible says about Judas when Satan had entered him that the Lord Rejected him. Judas when he took the bread, left immediately, and that happened at night.) Daytime is confined to limited hours. So, God does not wait indefinitely (Song of Songs 2:5-6). In the Song of Songs, we find the beloved turning away from her lover (because his waiting was prolonged) and left. The amazing mercy of God is truly astonishing because the evil of humanity has not overcome His righteousness, and the evil of humanity is also astonishing because it has not overcome the goodness of God.

# Chapter Eleven

In this chapter, the Apostle addresses his words to the nations, urging them not to become arrogant or look down upon the Jews, declaring that the Jews will believe in Christ in the latter days. He previously rebuked the Jews in order to open their hearts to the nations, and now he rebukes the nations to open their hearts to the Jews who return to God in faith. He desires to see everyone, the entire Church, united in love.

**Verse (1): "I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."**

God did not reject His people, and the evidence of the Jews not being rejected is that God accepted Paul, who was Jewish, and made him His apostle. Therefore, He will accept any Jew who believes in the Christ prophesied in the Holy Jewish Scriptures. And whoever believes in Christ is the true Israelite, while whoever rejects Christ has cut himself off from the olive tree. And whoever believes from the nations has been grafted into the olive tree. However, the olive tree is one, which is the Church, encompassing both Jews and nations.

**Verses (2-5): "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life'? But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."**

**whom He foreknew** - The people of God were known to Him, He chose them based on His prior knowledge that they would accept Him and abide by His law, and that He could prepare them for the coming of the Messiah from among them (Romans 8:29). God will not regret His choice, so how could He reject them after all that? The apostle gives an example from the days of Elijah, when Elijah thought that the righteous had all disappeared from the earth, but God told him that there is still a remnant who believe. Although Elijah did not see them, the eyes of the Lord were upon this believing remnant. The word "remnant" is used by Isaiah to refer to those who remained faithful to Christ. What happened in the days of Elijah is happening now. The situation now seems dark, and it appears that there are no believers among the Jews. But the apostle says, "No, there is a remnant whom God sees among these rejecting Jews, and there is a remnant whom God will see believe in the last days." It is for the sake of this remnant that God endures the sins of the Jews during this time. The remnant that existed in the days of the apostles were the disciples and the apostles, and the 3000 who believed after Peter's sermon, and the 2000 who believed after the miracle of Peter and John, and others. Therefore, we cannot imagine that all the Jews were rejected. **But there is a remnant whom God has chosen according to the election of grace.** This means that God has chosen them according to His grace, and it is evident that this remnant has received justification as a gift and grant from God. It is a grace because

there is no one deserving of Christ's death for their sake due to their works, nor deserving of the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. If we deserve anything because of our works, it is only death, for there is no one among us who has not sinned. But after being chosen by grace, we are called to work and strive so that the grace within us may increase and transform our nature.

**"Seven thousand men"** -  $7 \times 1000$  The meaning is that God knows the righteous individually.  $7 = 3 + 4$  meaning (The soul in the image of the Trinity) + (The body taken from the world). Therefore, the number 7 represents perfection because man is the most perfect creation of God on earth.

$7=6+1=$  (The Incomplete Human) + (The One God) So, the human being in himself is incomplete, but in God he becomes complete.

1000 is the number of the celestial beings, as angels are thousands upon thousands and myriads upon myriads.

**Reflection:** Until now, there are those who imagine that there are no longer any righteous people in the world except themselves. However, if this were true, God would have burned the world like Sodom and Gomorrah. But there are always righteous people everywhere, and God knows them and watches over them.

Therefore, the number 7000 refers to the group of those who are spiritually complete, whose souls and bodies have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit to live with a spiritual mindset on a heavenly level. Being mature men means living a mature life, far from childishness and indulgence in women (1 Corinthians 16:13).

**Verse (6): "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise, work is no longer work."**

This verse is a continuation of the previous verse in which the messenger stated that there is a remnant of Jews who have believed and this was by grace, meaning for free. Grace is a divine gift given freely by God, so their acceptance by God in faith is not based on any privileges they possessed or any works they did. And any person's choice to enter Christianity is by grace; for who is deserving of what Christ has done? Even if a person has good deeds, it is certain that they also have evil deeds. Therefore, entry into Christianity is by grace. So, if entry into Christianity is by grace, why do the Jews reject the entry of the Gentiles?

The nations did not have the Law of Moses to break, but they violated the natural law. And the Jews had the Law of Moses and violated it. Therefore, everyone has sinned, and God will accept all through His grace.

**If it is by grace then it is not by works.** If my entry into Christianity is a free gift that I do not deserve, then why do I attribute it to something good in me? If it was my choice and dependent on my good deeds, then it would be a reward for my actions and not a result of a free gift.

Otherwise, grace would not be grace.

**if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise, work is no longer work:** My entrance into faith is a grace, which is a free gift and not a reward for the work I have done. As for work, it is what I do myself. So, if a person's salvation depends on their work, it makes no sense to say afterwards that salvation is by grace.

But what comes after my entry into faith? After entering into faith, my role becomes one of striving in righteous deeds, through which grace increases. Day by day, my nature changes and I am transformed into the image of Christ (Colossians 3:10). Here, my righteous deeds become a

declaration of my will. When my will aligns with God's will, grace pours into me (this is what is known as the phenomenon of resonance). That is why the Lord Jesus asked the sick man at the pool of Bethesda, "Do you want to be healed?" He wants the patient's will to align with His own will so that the grace of healing can be poured into the patient. Jesus wants to heal him, but it is crucial that both wills are in agreement.

Therefore, there are two important words: **grace**, which is God's work in me and in the Church - and **works**, which are specifically mine. If they agree, miracles happen, and it is wrong to say that one enters heaven through their own works, and it is also wrong for someone not to strive, relying on the fact that grace will save them. However, those who work invoke grace to transform them and work with them.

Simply put, we understand the thought of the Apostle Paul without mixing things up. Grace is grace, and works are works. Although Paul, who spoke to us extensively about grace and understood its value, was certainly reliant on grace, we find him saying, "I have fought the good fight..." His fight was necessary in order for grace to accompany him, work with him, and in him. In this sense, the Apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). As an application of this, the Apostle says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Here we see the toil and work of the Apostle Paul, supported by grace, resulting in infinite possibilities. Let us see what the Apostle Paul, who traveled throughout Europe and wrote nearly half of the Gospel, accomplished. And the works of the Apostle Paul did not stop at positive striving, that is, preaching. Rather, let us see what we call negative striving, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27). He disciplines his body, and this is an action on his part, supported by grace because he desired his own salvation.

And note that God asks for laborers for the harvest and He himself does not do everything (Matthew 9:38). Therefore, we must work in order to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). And we work so that grace works with us. For grace is real when it comes to God's righteousness, and work is real when it comes to human effort.

The Messiah needed money to pay the tax, so He commanded Peter to go and catch a fish (and this is a skill Peter, the fisherman, is good at, so he is capable of doing it). Peter finds the required money in the belly of the fish (and this is a work and provision of grace that no human can do). Therefore, Christ asks us to do the work that we are capable of, and through His grace, He does what we as humans cannot do. And if we are unable to do something, then He does everything. . . Could humans have done anything in the face of the problem of death, which Christ solved through His cross?

**Verse (7): "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded."**

The people of Israel sought justification through the Law, but they did not obtain it. It is not a flaw in the Law, but rather due to the weakness of human nature. However, those who obtained justification through faith are those whom God chose from the Israelites. It is not a random selection, but rather a choice that aligns with God's will, as He desires that all may be saved (1 Timothy 4:2) [Resonance phenomenon = when the circuits of a radio station align with our chosen circuits, there is an amplification of signals from that station, and we hear it]. Those who

believed and embraced the forgiveness of their sins and received the life of Christ in them, walked in righteousness and were justified with the help of grace. As for the rest, they became hardened because of their unbelief. They resisted the truth and did not respond to the grace of God, and as a result, they were left to the corruption of their hearts. Their inner vision was veiled from seeing God, and their ears were deaf to hearing His voice. This was already foretold by the prophets (verse 8). Notice the words of the apostle, "**As for the rest, they became hardened.**" This indicates that hardness comes from within us, so no one can say that God did not choose them; rather, they did not respond to the work of grace.

**Verse (8): "Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.'"**

Quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10 and Isaiah 29:10. Isaiah prophesied because he knew in advance what would happen to them, that they would not understand the word of the Gospel due to the hardness of their hearts, which were filled with the spirit of stubbornness and resistance. He also said that "**God gave them eyes so they cannot see**" - indicating that it is not understood that God was the cause of their deception, but rather their stubbornness, pride, and sins prevented them from seeing what others saw and thus believing. They had eyes, but they were focused on themselves, so they only saw themselves. Their eyes were not directed towards God, so they did not know God and did not recognize Christ as the image of God. Due to their stubbornness, God removed His grace from them, as they did not deserve it (because they did not want it), and they became even more blind and deaf, like those in a deep sleep. This is equivalent to His statement in verse 7, "they were blinded" - in a resonating sense. They chose another station, which is self-glory and pride, and they did not choose the station of God's glory. And this is what the Lord of glory said to them, "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). The meaning of the resonating sense and its application can be found in the introduction to chapter 6.

**"To this very day"**: they have not realized or understood, and their eyes will not be opened to understand until that day which is known only to God, in the end times when they believe in Christ.

**Verse (9):- "And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them.'"**

**"Let their table become a snare and a trap"**. The table here refers to:

1. The profound sayings of the Old Testament, with their prophecies, are understood by those who perceive them spiritually and find in them the person of Christ, thus believing. However, those who cling to the letter **stumble** and are condemned because of their lack of faith in Christ, who was testified by their own law (their table). This table will serve as a witness against their stubbornness.
2. This may indicate that their celebrations and banquets will turn into sorrow and their Passover into grief. This is what happened at the hands of Titus in the year 70 AD. The verse is taken from (Psalm 69:22). Their Passover table became sorrow, while the Christian Passover became joy and forgiveness for sins and eternal life for all who partake in it, for they are without a temple



and scattered in the world.

3. After the coming of Christ, the value of their sacrifices and offerings diminished. The promised Christ came to fulfill these offerings, and their continued presentation of them became a deception for them. For whom do they offer them when God has rejected them? "He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man; He who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog's neck; He who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine's blood" (Isaiah 66:3).

**Verse (10): "Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always."**

From (Psalm 69:23), "**Let their eyes be darkened**" - their rejection of faith in Christ deprived them of the Holy Spirit, who opens the eyes. Their stubbornness in persisting in error blinded them (2 Corinthians 3:15-18) and darkened the eyes of their understanding. **and bow down their back always.**" be a sign of spiritual weakness, bondage to sin. For sin is heavy and burdensome, and the law is unable to lift it without grace. The darkness of the eyes and the bending of the back are not exclusive to the Jews; this happens to every Christian who walks in the path of sin without repentance. The bending of the back is for those who bear the burden alone, and this is what happened to the Jews when they rejected Christ. Christ alone forgives sins, and sins are a heavy burden. When they rejected Christ, they carried their sins alone, and their backs were bent. Therefore, the Lord says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28).

The meaning of the phenomenon of resonance and its application (refer to the introduction of Chapter 6).

**Verse (11): "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."**

**"have they stumbled that they should fall?":** **Stumbling** means colliding and falling, it is a fall that a person standing up again afterwards, and this is an indication of the Jews stumbling in Christ, their crucifixion of him, and their rejection of him. As for **falling**, it is a fall that does not lead to standing up and permanent rejection like God's rejection of the demons.

**"Certainly not":** Here, the Messenger is trying to uplift the spirits of the Jews so that they do not lose hope. He tells them that they will not fall forever, but rather what has happened is that some branches have been cut off. This is because God had already known them and chosen them, and God does not regret his previous choice, as he does not make mistakes. The verse is also directed towards the nations, so that they do not boast arrogantly against the Jews.

**"But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."**

Their fall was the crucifixion of Christ, and through this crucifixion, salvation came to the whole world. Their rejection of Christ was the reason for the entry of the nations (see the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:9-10). When the invited guests (the Jews) refused to come to the wedding feast, the king (God) sent his servants (the apostles) to gather from the highways whoever they found (the nations). And in the parable of the tenants (Matthew 21:33-43), the vineyard (the church of God) was given to new tenants (the nations) when the first tenants (the Jews) rejected the son (Christ) and killed him. This is what we have seen in the uproar of the

Jews against Paul everywhere, so he turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46 and 18:6).

"Provoke them to jealousy": God, in His wisdom, uses the slip of the Jews to save the nations, and in His love, He exploits the salvation of the nations to provoke the Jews and bring them back. He is the creator of goodness, transforming evil into good for the building of humanity. In His love, He uses every means to attract each one of us to remain steadfast in the olive tree. If God does this with the Jews who crucified Him, He will surely do it with me so that I do not perish. (Nations are the Gentiles)

**Verse (12): "Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!"**

**"Their fall is riches for the world"**: Their rejection of Christ and their crucifixion of Him became a blessing for the whole world. Through this, the nations obtained salvation. **"their failure riches for the Gentiles"**: Their lack of faith caused their decline, as their spirits became less than the nations. Their decline and their slip became a cause for abundant gifts to the nations. **"how much more their fullness!"**: The word fullness indicating the majority of Jews returning to faith. And it signifies their completion or fulfillment. When their number is complete as believers, it will become a source of great blessings for the world, which is the resurrection. We say "resurrection" because what is greater than the world's belief in Christ except the resurrection? It is as if God, through their faith, is saying, "Enough for the world. If My children have returned to Me, then enough sitting on the earth. Come, all of you, to the glory of heaven."

**Verse (13): "For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry."**

Here, Paul responds to those who imagine that he defends the Jews while neglecting his primary service to the Gentiles. However, we see in Paul's words a warning to the Gentiles, for God may abandon them if their hearts become hardened like the Jews. **"I magnify my ministry"** means that I will work and strive to spread the Gospel among the Gentiles. And indeed, this ministry is a glorious service, as it brings the Gentiles as believers to glorify the name of God. This is the same as what the Lord Christ said to the Father, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

**Verse (14): "if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them."**

**"I may provoke to jealousy"**: meaning, I will make them jealous. He is active among nations and glorifies his service among them. Perhaps with the multitude of believers from the nations, the Jews will be jealous of his relatives, meaning his kinsmen according to the flesh, and they will believe.

**Verse (15): "For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their**

## **acceptance be but life from the dead?"**

Here we see that the return of the Jews is a sign of life for everyone, meaning the spiritual resurrection for all the dead. This is a prophecy of a new resurrection of the dead for Christians, and from here we understand that one of the signs of the end times, before the general resurrection, is that the rest of the Jews will believe.

And this is exactly what the Lord Jesus said, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! "See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matthew 23:37-39). The sign of the second coming of the Lord Jesus is the faith of the Jews in Christ.

## **Verse (16): "For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches."**

**"if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy"**: The Law required the Jews to present the firstfruits of their harvest (the first bundle to come out of the field) to God, and thus, the entire harvest would be blessed. **Holy** means dedicated to God. **So is the lump** means that the dough is taken from the harvest. However, the idea that the people are the dough indicates that the whole people are one body. Paul believed that the fathers of the Jews, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets, were the holy firstfruits because they dedicated their lives to God. Therefore, the dough or the nation of the Jews as a whole is also set apart to become holy. And if the origin, that is, the fathers and the prophets, is holy, then the branches that grow from this origin, that is, the Israelites, are also set apart to become saints (here, the Jews are compared to a tree). Of course, not all Jews are meant here, but the remnant who believe, because not all Israelites are Israelites (Romans 9:7). The dough was holy until Christ came out of it, and now those who believe in Christ are holy. This statement is directed to the nations so that they do not reject or despise the Jews, but rather cultivate love among everyone.

## **Verse (17): "And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree."**

In nature, if we graft a bitter branch and place it in a good olive tree, it will produce a bitter olive. Therefore, it is natural to graft a branch well in the olive tree, and it is unnatural to graft a bitter branch from a wild olive tree in a good olive tree. The wild olive tree represents the nations, and the good olive tree represents the Jews. But the work of grace gives a new nature to the believing nations, so they become a good branch, grafted into the original olive tree. The Gentile who believes becomes a new creation in Christ, as God sanctifies the bitter branch and transforms it into a holy and pure branch. From this parable, we understand that the olive tree represents the Church, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament. The New Testament Church is an extension of the Jewish Church, and Christianity is the final stage of God's plan and righteousness. **"Some of the branches were broken off"** implies that the majority of Jews were cut off. From this, we understand that the word "remnant" refers to those who remain on the olive tree. **"wild olive tree"** refers to the nations whose fruits were useless because they were in

paganism. The branches that were cut off are the Jews who did not believe, and in their place came the believing nations.

**Verse (18): "do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you."**

If the enemy of good has overcome many Jews by their rejection of faith, he does not wield his weapon against those who believe, as he tries to break them with pride. Here the Apostle warns them against pride and despising the Jewish fathers, for if the nations now enjoy divine blessings, the root of the olive tree, meaning the fathers, is the source of that favor.

**Verse (19): "You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in'"**

Perhaps you justify your pride and say that the branches (referring to Jews) were cut off so that I could be fed in the tree.

**Verse (20): "Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear."**

You were not grafted into the tree because of your own works, but by the grace of God in which you believed.

**Do not be arrogant**, for pride prevents you from bearing fruit. If God has cut off the natural branches because He found no fruit in them (due to their pride and self-righteousness), then surely He will also cut off the gentile branches that bear no fruit due to their pride. **"But fear"**: be humble.

**Verse (21): "For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either."**

You must fear God so as not to be cut off, for you are not a natural branch. So, whoever thinks he stands should watch out, so he doesn't fall (1 Corinthians 10:11). And we must continue in our struggle and not take it lightly so as not to be cut off.

**Verse (22): "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off."**

If a person falls and behaves recklessly, they will find severity, but if they stand firm, they will find kindness.

**Verse (23): "And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is**

**able to graft them in again."**

**"if they do not continue in unbelief"**: If the ones who were cut off come back, they will be fed again. For God is capable, just as the wild branches can be restored to their natural state. However, note here the freedom of will, as humans are free to remain steadfast in faith or abandon it.

**Verse (24): "For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"**

This is a reference to the ease of their grafting and their return to the original olive tree if they believe. And his statement **"their own olive tree"** indicates that the Jews will not fall (they will never be rejected) because their olive tree remains. According to nature, . . . **"Contrary to nature"**: the nations were wild olive trees because of their worship of idols and their impurity, and the wild olive tree has a bitter taste according to nature. It is natural to graft a good branch into the olive tree, not a bitter branch, to improve the variety. But grafting a bitter branch into a good olive tree is contrary to nature. But indeed, grace has changed the bitter branch into a good branch.

**Verse (25): "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."**

**This mystery** is an extraordinary work of God that was hidden at Him and then declared. The mystery is that the hardness happened only to a part of the Jews, while the other part accepted Christ. This hardness lasted for a certain period of time = **in part**, after which God will accept the remaining part (partially). God is waiting for the fullness of the nations, meaning He will complete those whom He has chosen, and He knows their number. They are the ones who are fully filled according to the fullness of His house (Luke 14:23) "until my house is filled". Also see Revelation 6:10-11). These are the chosen ones from the nations whom He had previously known and appointed (Romans 8:29). When the fullness of the nations is reached, Israel will return and accept the faith, but this does not mean all of them, only the remnant. Here, we see the Apostle Paul defending the righteousness of God against those who assume that God chose the Jews and then rejected them.

**Verse (26):- "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob'"**

The apostle here quotes from Isaiah 59:20-21 and Isaiah 27:9. **"And so all Israel will be saved"** - not all, but the remnant (verse 5). By **"all,"** he means all those who will believe and remain faithful to the olive tree. These will believe in the end times after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **"The Deliverer will come out of Zion"** - for Christ came out of Zion in His first

coming, and the remnant believed in Him. And in the last days, the prophets Elijah and Enoch will come out of Zion to stir faith in the hearts of the remnant, that they may believe in Christ. For the Lord Jesus Christ, before His second coming, will send who saves the remnant to turn away ungodliness (Malachi 4:5). Elijah and Enoch will be the witnesses visible to Christ, and the angel Michael will be the unseen witness: "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Everyone who is found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).

**Verse (27): "For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."**

"**And this is the covenant from Me to them**" - the covenant referred to here is the one mentioned in the previous verse (26).

The reference to the removal of sins aligns with Jeremiah 31:31-34, which prophesies about the New Covenant where sins are forgiven through redemption. In Jeremiah 31:35-37, there is a prophecy about the remnant, referring to the acceptance of faith by the Jews in the end times.

**Verse (28): "Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers."**

**Concerning the gospel** (preaching the good news), the Jews, due to their disbelief and crucifixion of Christ, have become enemies of God, so that you may enter into the faith and the kingdom of the Messiah. As for their election, which God had prepared for them long ago, they are beloved by God for the sake of their ancestors according to the flesh. Therefore, their rejection is only partial.

**From the perspective of the Gospel** = This is the good news that we proclaim, your acceptance, O nations, now, and their acceptance finally.

**Verse (29): "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."**

Those whom God calls, He grants gifts to, and those whom God gifts, He calls. God chose Israel and bestowed upon them abundantly, and He called them His firstborn to be a light to the nations. And those whom God loves, He loves them to the utmost, for God loves them and they are beloved, because God is not susceptible to deception and error when He chooses and when He calls. Therefore, He does not regret the gifts He has promised to bestow, nor does He retract the call He has made.

**Verses (30-31): "For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy."**

You should not be surprised that the promises and gifts of God must be fulfilled, for you Gentiles

also were called by God before Abraham, but at that time you rejected the call and worshiped idols. But now, because of the Jews' unbelief, you have received mercy and have been accepted into the fold of faith. Similarly, the Jews, although they do not currently show obedience and faith, will one day accept the faith. **So that they may also receive mercy in the same way you have shown mercy**, for just as it happened to you, it will also happen to them.

**Verse (32): "For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all."**

"**Committed**" means "He condemned or judged." And the meaning of the verse is that: Indeed, the disbelief of these nations was evident from the beginning, just as the disbelief of the Jews is evident now. The Jews crucified Christ, and the nations worshiped their idols, and we, who still continue to sin until now, all have disobeyed and disgraced God. And God manifests His mercy to all.

**Verse (33): "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"**

In the previous verses, we saw the Apostle Paul explaining how God accepted the Jews and rejected the Gentiles, then accepted the Gentiles and rejected the Jews, and finally accepted the Jews. Paul then began to ponder the wisdom of God, realizing that he could not fully understand God's plan and why He did this. By the same logic, it is not for me to question, "What is your wisdom, O Lord, in this matter or that? Will so-and-so be saved or not?" Do not think, for the wisdom of God is higher than all our thoughts. Do not ponder why God allowed this trial, simply say that it is certain that it is for the good, even if we do not understand. Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus to Peter (John 13:7), "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Thus, we hear in Isaiah 55:9 that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. In general, it is difficult for humans to understand all of God's commandments and comprehend how He governs and directs things to achieve salvation for humanity. Paul, who knew more about the secrets of God than anyone else, sits here as someone who does not understand and can only glorify God for the depth of His judgments.

**"His ways past finding out"**: Understanding and clarifying all aspects. For everything is naked before God, as for me, I have some knowledge. God is the Examiner of hearts and minds, but I only know what is apparent before me.

**Example:** If I see a good person, I say that God should increase their wealth and health. This is because I judge based on material standards, but I find that God tests and tries them. This is because God knows that if He were to increase their wealth, they would lose the chance to save their soul. God's calculations are different from mine; His calculations are heavenly. God wants to complete His servants, and this may happen through suffering, as it happened to Christ Himself (Hebrews 2:10). How much more so for us humans.

**Verses (34-35): "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?"**

**"who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?"** Who has given the Lord or lent

something to Him that he may receive a reward in return for his giving to God. Therefore, Israel has no right to ask God why He has forsaken them, as God has withdrawn His mercy from them. God is not indebted to them, and it is not my right to ask God why He has allowed this or that. It is not my right to demand that God explains every situation He allows, as God is not indebted to anyone.

**Verse (36): "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."**

God governs all things because He is the one who created them all with His wisdom. And for the sake of His glory, all creatures shout and turn towards Him. To Him be all glory forever and ever. Amen.



# Chapter Twelve

**Verse (1): "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."**

**"Therefore"** - This indicates that what will be requested in the upcoming verses and chapters is an extension of what has been previously explained. The Apostle has already explained aspects of faith that relate to salvation and has shown that grace through faith is a divine power that overcomes the power of sin. Now, we see that we are called to strive. The meaning of grace does not imply that the believer should be lazy, for if so, grace would be ineffective. Therefore, the Apostle says, "Be filled with the Spirit," because grace is a power given by the Holy Spirit. The power of grace working in us increases through being filled with the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is achieved through striving. The Apostle explains the way of striving through which we are filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18-21. Here, he speaks of striving as "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11). He also says, "Do not quench the Spirit" (by negligence and sin). Quenching the Spirit is indeed a loss of the work of grace, while striving gives us an overflow of grace upon grace (John 1:16). This is what the Apostle meant by saying, "Stir up the gift of God which is in you" (2 Timothy 1:6).

If works and strife were unnecessary and if grace does everything, then what is the meaning of the Apostle asking believers to carry out these commandments, such as presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice (this verse)? There is no separation between faith and actions (works). For example, someone who believes that grace does everything will become lazy and inactive, and someone who believes that salvation is accomplished in a moment and that their name is written in the Book of Life, and they will not perish, no matter what happens, will be inclined to sin as long as they are assured of salvation. Therefore, beliefs have a clear impact on actions and behaviors. There is no practical behavior without faith, and there is no living faith without works (James' Epistle). Actions are shaped according to the beliefs that the Apostle explained in the previous chapters. Another example: Someone who believes in intercession will have friendship with the heavenly beings, sweet communion with them, and a sense of belonging to the open heaven.

As is customary for the Apostle Paul, he dedicates the last part of his letter to practical commandments as the fruit of a life of faith and the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. However, the Holy Spirit is not given to those who do not strive. The Fathers say about grace that it is a free gift, but it is only given to those who deserve it. And who deserves it except those who work and trade with their talents, as the Lord of glory said about the lazy servant who did not work, "So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. "Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away." (Matthew 25:27-29). And what about his fate? The Lord of glory says, "And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:30).

**"By the mercies of God"** - It may mean "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to do this and that." However, it also means that if I am asking you to present your bodies as living sacrifices, and in this there is some pain, before I make this request, I assure you that God will deal with your offered bodies gently and will give you sweet consolations that correspond to your sacrifices. It also means that in response to God's mercy and compassion towards us, we should act in a certain way.

**"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice"** - The priest is the one who offers sacrifices, and from this we understand the statement of the Scriptures that we have been made kings and priests (Revelation 1:6; 1 Peter 2:9). There is a special priesthood, and this is the mystery of priesthood, being a servant of the mysteries of the Church. And there is a general priesthood for all believers, in which everyone offers sacrifices:

1. Praise (Hebrews 13:15).
2. Service to the poor (Hebrews 13:16).
3. Humility and meekness (Psalm 51:17).
4. Prayers and lifting up of hands (Psalm 141:2).
5. Presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice (this verse).

**"Present your bodies as a living sacrifice"** - The Apostle's explanation in the preceding verses is about what God has given us in terms of grace, so what do we offer in return? Our bodies as a living sacrifice. In Jewish worship, animal sacrifices were offered (literally slaughtered). However, in Christian worship, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices. This means that we do not physically die, but rather we put to death the old man by crucifying our desires (Galatians 5:24), as well as through fasting, prostrations, and prolonged prayers. We should consider ourselves dead to sin and refrain from using our bodies as instruments of sin, indulging in the desires of this world. When we deny the old man the sensory pleasures, it dies through the work of the Spirit and His assistance (Romans 8:13).

Examples of not using our members as instruments of sin:

1. Put your eyes in the dust.
2. Close your ears to hearing falsehood and even what is close to falsehood.
3. Hold your tongue from speaking evil.
4. Refrain from indulging in the sins of the world that you used to take pleasure in.
5. Increase in fasting and prayers.
6. Exert yourself in doing good deeds, even if your body is tired. This is equivalent to presenting your body as a living sacrifice. And note that our bodies are the instrument through which what is in our hearts and minds are expressed.

**"holy, acceptable to God"** = Sanctification is the separation from the world and the dedication to God without blemish.

**"acceptable to God"** = The sacrificial offerings were not as pleasing to God as the living sacrifices, such as contrition, and this was the understanding of the Fathers. David expressed this in Psalm 51:16-17, "You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit". God is not pleased with bulls as sacrifices, but He is pleased with lips that praise Him despite the pain of the body (Hosea 14:2). Our sacrifice is pleasing to God when we offer it with love in response to His love. What pleases God when we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice? When we do so, we give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to draw us to the heavens. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another" (Galatians 5:17). And whoever lives in the heavens, leaving behind their sinful desires, will be saved, and this is what pleases God - the salvation of our souls.

**"your reasonable service"** = Refer to the interpretation of Romans 9:1. Offering our bodies as living sacrifices is a worship that we should present as priests with a rational conviction, and this is what the Spirit does, convincing the believer of this. Rational worship is an understanding of the mysteries of God's love, where the heart is set ablaze with love for God and desires to offer its body as a sacrifice of love to the God who has loved him with all this love. Rational worship is the persuasion of the Holy Spirit to the believer of what He is doing (Jeremiah 20:7). But the worship that is blind, arising from ignorance, is only fitting for idols. As for God, He says, 'Come now, and let us reason together' (Isaiah 1:18). God does not impose upon us anything unreasonable or unacceptable. Rational worship is the conviction that we surrender our members as instruments of righteousness to God instead of instruments of sin. Conviction is important before we offer our bodies as living sacrifices. 'O LORD You induced me, and I was persuaded' (Jeremiah 20:7). It is a worship in which all the faculties of man participate - the soul, the mind, the body, and the spirit. Note that God convinces Adam that he should have a helper corresponding to him before creating Eve. He made him notice that all creation consists of male and female, and this becomes a demand for him first, which God fulfills later (Genesis 2:18-21). Also, observe the work of the Holy Spirit in children who find joy in God and love Him without understanding anything. But the Spirit gives them this conviction and love. On the contrary, in pagan worship, everything is mysterious and in obscure words. But in Christian priesthood, every word that is spoken is proclaimed in the Liturgy books, and everyone understands and comprehends it, and everyone is convinced by it, even what may be difficult to grasp with the mind. The Holy Spirit enables us to accept it and be convinced by it.

**Verse (2): "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."**

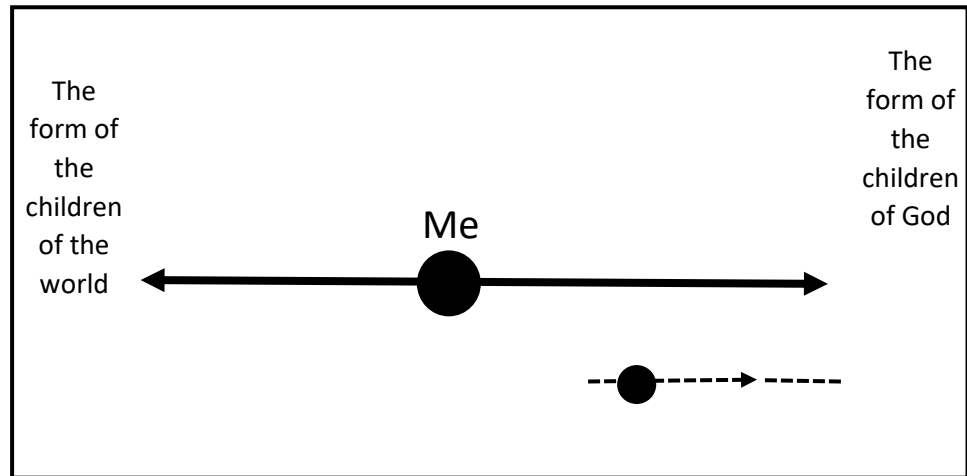
There is a picture of the children of God, in which they take on the likeness of Christ in His love, holiness, and humility. They become a light to the world. On the other hand, there is a picture of the children of the world, whose focus is on extravagance, fashion, violence, and lust. They are in darkness.

**"Do not be conformed to this world"** - The greatest enemy of being transformed into the image of God is to imitate the world and its children. The world is transient and deceptive, and those who conform to its image become perishable like it.

**"conformed"** - Become like and imitate. It is incorrect to say "everyone does this" for a simple reason: I am not just people, but I am a child of God. After baptism, we have become heavenly creatures and citizens, praying to our Father in heaven. God dwells in us. Either we abandon all that we have received and become like the world, or we leave the image of the world and undergo a transformation. **"Be transformed"** - The word "transformed" indicates the new creation and the new birth through baptism, which has the power to assist in this transformation. It enables us to "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Paul asks us to leave the old form, relying on the power we have received within us from the Holy Spirit. As we change from the image of this world, we take on the form of children of God and bear the likeness of Christ. Those who conform to the image of the world become perishable like it, while those who bear the image of Christ will be in eternal glory like Him. And how is this transformation accomplished?

**"by the renewing of your mind"** - Through baptism, we gain spiritual awareness, which

continues to unfold through study, meditation, and reading. With time, the mind undergoes renewal. Each time there is a state of mental elevation, the physical mind transforms into a spiritual mind, and this is the second birth through which we become a new creation (1 Peter 1:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17). As the mind opens up, a person begins to prioritize



being with God, leaving behind places of evil. Day by day, they find themselves completely turned away from them.

In the beginning, you find the person wavering between different things. Perhaps they push themselves to go to church, but they find joy in worldly pursuits. However, with time, they no longer find pleasure except in the church. Day by day, their principles change. In their initial form, they were concerned with clubs and entertainment. . . And now, their only interest is in praising God. This happens through the influence of the Holy Spirit, which gives them mental conviction. Added to this is personal experience, as they taste the joy of life with God. The more they present their bodies as a living sacrifice, the more they are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, who brings about change and renewal in their mind. Indeed, what used to bring them joy in the past no longer does. In the past, they found joy in wealth and acquiring it, but now their only joy is in the will of God. **"That you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"** - As the believer draws closer to the image of the children of God, they are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enlightens them that the will of God is always good and pleasing, and therefore, they surrender their lives fully to God, and their soul becomes pure and undisturbed by anything. Such a person will fulfill the will of God in their life because they approve of it. This person no longer questions, "I want to know the will of God in this matter or that matter," for the Spirit gives them complete illumination. They know their way, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of counsel (2 Timothy 1:7). Even if things go against their desires, they say, "It is for the good as long as it is the will of God, for God never makes mistakes."

Note that the word **"acceptable"** in this verse is different from the word **"acceptable"** in verse 1. In this verse, the soul finds itself in peace, content with whatever God decrees. The Holy Spirit within it declares to the soul the fatherhood and love of God (Romans 8:15, 16). Furthermore, the soul finds inner peace if it walks according to the will of God and does not conform to the ways of this world, but rather keeps God's commandments. However, if it walks in the path of sin, it loses its peace. Therefore, in this verse, the word is specifically referring to the soul. Indeed, in verse 1, the word "acceptable" refers to God's acceptance and satisfaction with our sacrifice when we present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Therefore, in this verse, the word is specifically referring to God.

**Verse (3): "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."**

The relationship of this verse to the preceding and following verses.

**Verse 1:** Presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice in response to everything Christ has done for us.

**Verse 2:** Transforming our minds to be conformed to the image of God's children.

**Verse 3:** The expected struggle for those who practice what has been mentioned before, the danger of pride, and the understanding that a person is capable of being everything in the church, being the only righteous believer who has experienced the way of God. Also this verse means that in our spiritual journey to transform our minds or present our bodies as living sacrifices, we should not impose laws above our levels that we have heard from our elders. However, we must be under guidance. What may be suitable for one person may not be suitable for another.

**Verses 4-6:** The church is one body, and each member has their own gift and role. This is a remedy for those who think they are everything in the church. Therefore, do not despise others, for they have a role just like you.

**The remaining chapter:** How to walk as a faithful member in the church.

**"Think soberly"** means to have a higher regard or estimation of oneself. Therefore, the Apostle's advice to those who have been transformed is not to have excessive concern or estimation of oneself. Instead, one should have a humble mindset. "For the sacrifice to God is a broken spirit." Blessed are the poor in spirit. **"Think soberly"** - one should exercise self-control and not rush or make hasty decisions. For example, if one hears about the long prayers of St. Anthony, they should not immediately decide to do the same, or if they hear about the fasting of a saint, they should not blindly imitate it, or if they learn about the ascetic practices of a father, they should not try to replicate them. This is where the importance of the spiritual father comes in. Lack of discernment leads to thinking that one is the most important person in the ministry and that without them, the church will collapse.

God has apportioned to each individual talents to fulfill their role. So, if someone has fewer talents, they should not feel small-minded, and if someone has great talents, they should not be prideful. Feeling small-minded or being prideful is not a matter of thinking soberly. For someone who has ten talents, they are required to fulfill another ten, and for someone who has five, they are not asked to fulfill ten, but only their five talents. (Refer to verse 16). Therefore, we hear in the following verses that the church is one body, and we are all members. This does not prevent us from seeking to grow more, and God gives according to our needs, but those who receive should not become prideful. Rather, the believer should say, "LORD, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me." (Psalms 131:1). Saint Augustine also said that when the Scripture says, "God does not give the Spirit by measure," it was speaking about Christ and not about humanity because the Spirit dwells in Him in the fullness of divinity. But for humans, God gives to each according to their capacity (John 7:38). However, each person only reaches the fullness of their capacity, according to the talents given to them, and when they are filled, they long to receive more and thus continue to grow.

**"According to the measure of faith"** means that the gift is according to one's faith, and faith is a gift from God that He apportions. Faith is not given to everyone in the same measure, or with the same vision, breadth, or strength. According to His foreknowledge of each individual's abilities,

weaknesses, aspirations, and responsibilities, God grants them a portion of faith that aligns with their capabilities. Thus, faith becomes a personal matter for each individual, and they should not boast or become inflated with pride, for it is God who has given them this faith. Furthermore, they should not impose their faith on others, disregarding their own capabilities. Therefore, every action we perform is connected to the measure of our faith. Let's take an example: The hermit fathers live in caves outside the monasteries and only return once a week to attend the liturgy and receive communion. After the communion, they take with them the necessary water and some food and return to their caves. On the other hand, the hermit fathers venture into the desert without any provisions, no water, no food, nothing. They have a strong faith that God is able to sustain them, and they do not need to return to the monastery. But is this level of faith suitable for everyone, to enter the desert without food or water, confident that God will provide for them? However, those who strive and kindle the talent of God within them, God increases their faith beyond measure. That is why Paul the Apostle tells the Thessalonians that their faith is growing (2 Thessalonians 1:3). The disciples also asked the Lord, saying, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). (Review commentary on Revelations 1:17) Faith increases through thanksgiving in the midst of hardships that God uses to reveal His hand in our lives so our faith Increases (Col 2:7). As for those who complain do not see the hand of God and their faith weakens. Likewise, the more I know Christ, His power, and His love, the more my faith increases. This comes through a deep relationship with God (prayer and studying His word). So we understand that faith is a measure, and God apportions a different measure to each individual. Those who trade with their measure of faith wisely will see their faith grow.

**Verses (4-6): "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith."**

Verses 4-5: We are all members in the one body of Christ, each member complements the other, and the body relies on all its members. Everyone serves one another. "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10). God gives us talents to serve others, so they are not for self-glory but for the glory of God and the building of the Church. God created us for good works to be carried out in our lives (Ephesians 2:10), and the talents are given to us to fulfill this service successfully. Therefore, we all need to serve with humility. If every gift is from God, then why be proud? Here, we see that the foot requires a larger quantity of blood than the finger. From this, we understand that God apportions to each according to their work. No one should say, "I am nothing, so I will sit back and be silent." Rather, they should acknowledge, "I am indeed nothing, but Christ is working in me, so I will strive to the best of my ability, supported by His grace."

Verse 6: We have different abilities according to the grace of the Holy Spirit given to us. We should be content with these talents and not selfishly seek after those talents that were not given to us by the Holy Spirit. For it is God who gives the talents, not based on our desires, but so that we can fulfill the required work, as God has apportioned each one of us a task to perform. This is what the Apostle said, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure (talent) of Christ's gift." (Ephesians 4:7). However, we notice that the Apostle did not distinguish between great talents and small talents, for they all come from God.

**"let us prophesy in proportion to our faith"** prophecy is the preaching and proclamation of the word of God (1 Corinthians 14:1-3). It is the declaration of God's mysteries towards humanity for the building of the Church and the enjoyment of future glories. It is the revelation not of temporal events, but of eternal glory. In the Old Testament, prophecy was a sign pointing to Christ, and now it is the entrance of souls into the anticipation of His final coming to partake in the inheritance with Him.

And this work is not human, but it is a gift from God to the speaker and the listener. Therefore, both of them need faith to partake in this divine blessing that pours out when vessels of faith are found. There is no prophecy except for the believer. "I believed, therefore I spoke" (Psalm 116:10). So, preaching requires faith from the speaker and faith from the listener. If a person does not have faith in eternal life, what will compel them to turn away from evil and walk in the path of repentance that the preacher speaks of? And note that even the prophets of the Old Testament, their goal was not only to prophecy about the future, but also to exhort the people to repentance.

And we notice that the first gift mentioned by the Apostle here is prophecy, and he did not mention the gift of apostleship as he did in his letters to the Corinthians and Ephesians when speaking on the same subject (Ephesians 4:1, 1 Corinthians 12:28). Here, he did not mention any hierarchical degrees of bishops or priests, nor healing gifts or tongues. This is because the Church in Rome did not have any apostles visit it. The Church in Rome was not established in the conventional sense until around the year 62 when the apostles Peter and Paul went there.

**Verse (7): "or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching"**

**"or ministry"** refers to administrative services, assisting the poor, and serving at the tables. However, it also includes baptism, establishing churches in the early Church, and even preaching. Even apostleship is considered a service. Every spiritual work is a service. The intended meaning is that whoever has a ministry should be faithful in their service and not be preoccupied with others.

**"he who teaches"** refers to teaching divine truths and doctrines, and the teacher is concerned with intellectual instruction. These teachers help the people in correcting their paths.

**Verse (8): "he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."**

**"he who exhorts"** includes urging repentance, reflections, advising others, and guiding them towards virtue. **"He who gives, with liberality"** Given that the Apostle was referring to church services, therefore it is possible that he who gives here is the servant responsible for distributing to the poor in the church. This person should give generously without considering material things, as God will send abundant blessings. As one faithful servant said, "Let your box be empty" (meaning, give abundantly), for God will fill the empty box. If it is found full, it will be left behind. This verse applies to personal giving. **"He who leads"** is the person responsible for managing the needs of the church, serving as the hands and feet of the priest. **"He who shows mercy"** refers to those who perform acts of mercy, such as serving widows and the sick. **"With cheerfulness"** indicates that one should not be sorrowful while serving Christ in the person of

His brothers and sisters, as it is said, "I was sick and you visited Me" (Matthew 25:36). There are servants who kiss the hand of the sick, believing that they are visiting Christ Himself.

**Verse (9): "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."**

The Apostle moves on to behavioral actions and starts with brotherly love, for love is the prevailing concept that binds the Church together as living and interconnected members (1 John 4:3), and love is the foundation. If love is accompanied by hypocrisy, it is impossible to build anything good upon it. "**Let love be without hypocrisy**" means that it should not seek anything in return. It is driven by the desire to please God and serve others with sincerity, and this can only be accomplished by those in whom God dwells in their hearts. "**Cling to what is good**" just as a man clings to his wife. In general, those who have love without hypocrisy will abhor evil.

**Verse (10): "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another"**

"**Be kindly affectionate to one another**" means to show love with warmth. The way to establish this affection quickly and create friendships is for each person to strive to honor their neighbor, not competing to seek honor but rather in giving honor. Affection is the manifestation of the love that is in the heart. Showing this love will increase mutual love.

**Verse (11): "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"**

"**fervent in spirit**" refers to the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit. However, those who worship fervently will be filled with the Spirit, as it is written, "Stir up the gift of God which is in you" (2 Timothy 1:6). The more we are filled with the Spirit, the more fervently we will worship, and the more we worship, the more we will be filled with the Spirit, and so on. The starting point is to decide that our worship will not be lukewarm and tasteless. The secret of the Christian life lies in receiving the Holy Spirit, for He is the fire that moves a person and makes them diligent in their efforts. This is achieved through long, powerful prayers, contrition, prostration, fasting, and engaging in praise without laziness in service. In order to receive the Holy Spirit and be filled with Him, we must pray earnestly (Luke 11:13).

"Serving the Lord" means that God, who created us, redeemed us, and bestowed life upon us, deserves from us worship of gratitude and praise. And God, whom we have repeatedly wronged, deserves from us worship of contrition, prostration, and seeking His mercy.

Some may imagine that worshiping the Lord brings boredom and distress, while the world and its pleasures are a source of joy and delight. This is a satanic deception. The truth is quite the opposite. Worshiping God is a source of true joy and delight, and here's why: a) It is continuous, not temporary. b) It triumphs over any pain (John 16:22) We find that the twenty-four elders cast their crowns and leave their thrones to worship before the divine throne (Revelation 4:10). Why do they do that? They have found that prostration and worship give them more joy than their own thrones. Similarly, in the following verse, it begins by saying, "**rejoicing in hope.**"

Therefore, those who offer worship to God find joy.



**Verse (12): "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer"**

As we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will worship fervently and our hope in what Christ has prepared for us in heaven will increase, which gives us joy. Those who have hope will rejoice.

**"Rejoicing in hope"** also means that those who have hope in heaven will bear the weaknesses of others, for their eyes are fixed on the heaven they are heading to. **"Patient in tribulation"** means that no matter how much tribulation increases, one will not complain.

1. What the eye of hope sees of unseen things in the heavens gives him endurance in tribulation. Because his eye is fixed on what is unseen, not on what is seen (2 Corinthians 4:18). And this is what the Holy Spirit gives us, to see with the eye of faith "what eye has not seen... God has revealed to us through His Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

2. What he sees with the eyes of faith, that "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28), also gives him endurance along with hope in tribulation. For God allows tribulations so that we may be perfected (James 1:4). And patience arises from our understanding that all things work for good, even those that cause us pain. Patience is not a matter of self-discipline and strength, but it is a gift from God (James 1:3-5).

3. Tribulation, when accompanied by thanksgiving, gives us growth in faith (Colossians 2:7).

4. Tribulation and trials are a sign of God's love, "For whom the Lord loves He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6).

5. One of the things that patience in tribulation gives us is the promise that "if we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

And how do we remain steadfast in this situation? By being persistent in prayer.

The Lord, to whom be glory, did not promise us peace and joy in the same way as the world does. He said, "In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). However, He adds in the same verse, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace." He also said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). The world offers wealth, positions, worldly pleasures, and so on. Therefore, we understand that there are two concepts of peace:

1. Peace and joy in the way of the world, referring to worldly positions, abundance of wealth, good health, and all the pleasures of life, etc.

2. The peace of Christ, which fills the heart amidst tribulations and persecution from the world, is stronger than the tribulations of the world. However, this peace has a condition, which is that we remain steadfast in Christ, "that in Me you may have peace." Jesus Christ says about the joy He gives us in the midst of the world's sorrows, "your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22). This is what we call victory in Christianity. This is the explanation of the Lord's saying "I have overcome the world". Victory in Christianity is not about triumphing over the enemy that persecutes us, but rather the peace and joy that Christ gives us in the midst of tribulations, which cannot overcome us. A clear example of this can be found in the story of the three youth in the fiery furnace, where we see that the surrounding flames did not harm them because the Son of God was with them. Only the ropes that bound them were burned (symbolizing how tribulations burn the bonds of sin for us to be perfected). Comfort and endurance come from the fact that Christ is with us in the experience, just as He was with the three youth.

The question now is, how do we attain this victory? We find the answer in this verse:

1. **Rejoicing in hope:** Hope in the joys of the kingdom and the glories of heaven make us feel the insignificance of everything in this world. Moreover, we rejoice in this glory and joy prepared for us. We should note that joy is not simply a mental conviction, but rather this hope, faith, and trust in God pour the Holy Spirit's joy into our hearts. Story: A man passed away, leaving his wealth to his three children. They went to the priest who requested an equal division of the inheritance, with the condition that the division would not take place immediately, but rather the money would be spent on a project that would bring them profit. He asked them to sign a document confirming this, with him as a witness. The youngest son rejected the idea of the document and said that love is stronger than papers. The youngest son was still studying. The project of the two elder brothers grew, and their wealth increased, making them greedy. When the youngest brother finished his studies and demanded his rights, they refused and told him that he had nothing with them, saying, "Hit us with your best shot." He went to the priest who witnessed the agreement. The priest came, but they did not listen to him. However, everyone was surprised to see the youngest brother crying with joy, embracing his brothers, saying, "I don't want anything, what matters is the love between us. Love is the path to heaven, but money means nothing... I have bought heaven with my share." And he left with joy. The next day, the priest was surprised during the liturgy when the youngest brother came forward to receive the sacrament and said that the Virgin Mary appeared to him and told him that when he said, "I have bought heaven with my share," heaven responded to his prayer. Go tomorrow to receive the sacrament, and after that, heaven will await you with joy. And it happened. After the liturgy, the young man went home and closed his physical eyes, only to open them in the place he bought in heaven. There is a question: what made this young man rejoice in the midst of his distress over losing his wealth? The answer is that his eyes were fixed on heaven, hoping to have a share in this glory. He did not have hope in the glories of the world because, through his faith, he realized the passing nature of this world. So how can he place his hope in something transient? He has put his hope in a permanent thing, as the Apostle said "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18)

2. **"Patient in tribulation":** This hope that lifts our eyes to heaven, our eternal dwelling, allows us to feel the lightness of our temporary distress in comparison to the weight of the eternal glory that awaits us (Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). The Apostle James adds to this that we should consider it joy when we face trials, as they perfect us (James 1:2-5). Why should we rejoice? Because trials are a sign of God's love, allowing our faith to grow. God allows trials to strengthen our faith. The continuous trials, accompanied by witnessing the mighty hand of God, increase our faith. This was evident in the life of David, who had previous experiences with killing lions and bears, which gave him strong faith to face Goliath. Therefore, consecutive trials, along with gratitude and avoiding complaints, increase our faith. Faith is born small and grows, which is why the disciples asked the Lord, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5), and the faith of the Thessalonians was growing (2 Thessalonians 1:3). The Apostle Paul says that faith grows with gratitude and avoiding complaints (Colossians 2:7). With trials, the consolations that God provides as a refuge for our pain increase, enabling us to endure the trial. With increased faith and consolations, patience is developed. Patience is not mere submission, or giving up, or human courage; it is an expectation with trust in God's intervention, based on previous experiences. Patience is a divine gift that results from faith that God nurtures and consolations that God provides (2 Corinthians 1:5). Therefore, the Church has taught us to give thanks in all circumstances. However, patience is truly a gift from God, but the human effort required is

gratitude and avoiding complaints in order to receive this gift. Those who are patient with thanksgiving, their faith grows as they see God's hand. Moreover, those who endure pain and distress with patience, confident that God is the maker of all good things, will share in the glory of Christ. Those who participate in Christ's suffering will also participate in His glory (Romans 8:17). Trusting in the love of God, Who leads us as a loving father through trials and tribulations towards the inheritance of glory, is the reason for our joy.

3. "**Continuing steadfastly in prayer**": What enables us to lift our eyes to heaven, see the glory prepared for us, and endure with patience and joy? It is the Holy Spirit. "What no eye has seen... But God has revealed them to use through His Spirit...that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." (1 Corinthians 2:9-12). But this requires being filled with the Holy Spirit. And how do we become filled with the Spirit? Through prayer. "Your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13).

**Verse (13): "distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality."**

**Participating:** He does not say "giving," because the giver receives more blessings from God than what they have given. The truth is that God gives to everyone, and we all participate in God's blessings. When they give to the needy, it is because God has given to them so that they can give to those in need. They were stewards of a gift that God gave them (see the example of the unjust steward). They will also be participants in the spiritual gifts that God gives to the needy. They give material things from what God has given them, and in return, God compensates them with even greater material and spiritual blessings. Note that the poor are called **saints**, and Christ calls them His brothers. **Given to hospitality:** This means that they do not wait for others to ask, but rather they actively seek to provide hospitality, as Abraham and Lot did when they welcomed strangers. It is important to note that the strangers mentioned in this verse specifically refer to Christians who sought refuge from persecution. Additionally, it refers to the brethren who traveled and preached the gospel.

**Verse (14): "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."**

"**Bless**" means to pray for blessings upon them, to mention their good qualities, and to not retaliate with insults when insulted. We are to pray and ask for good things for those who persecute us, without seeking revenge. "**Bless and do not curse.**" Christ took upon Himself the curse that we deserved, in order to bestow His blessing upon us. How can we, then, curse those whom Christ has lifted the curse from them? We are called to bless as Christ has blessed us. Those who bless their persecutors demonstrate their willingness to endure suffering for the sake of Christ. But those who curse their persecutors may eventually find themselves cursing others around them, and they may even curse God Himself (Revelation 16:10-11). Let us refrain from the habit of cursing and train our tongues to speak blessings. It is worth noting that the word "blessing" is a Hebrew word that means speaking good words about others. Therefore, when we say that we bless God, it means praising Him, thanking Him, and praising Him for all His goodness towards us.

**Verse (15): "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."**

This is not merely social courtesy, but rather it is a fellowship of the members, imitating Christ who wept at the tomb of Lazarus and rejoiced with His disciples for the blessings they received (Luke 10:21). No one can truly rejoice with others unless they have Jesus dwelling in them and have received His life. Rejoicing with those who rejoice is much harder than weeping with those who weep because the natural human tendency is to envy the successful. However, those who are new creations will resemble Christ. This is what will happen in heaven, where we will rejoice with those who are in greater glory than us. It is worth noting that sharing our emotions with our brethren increases love among us.

**Verse (16): "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion."**

**"Be of the same mind toward one another"**: According to different translations, this means: all of you should have the same mindset and the same goal, which is the glory of Christ and the love that binds you together. If there is love, there will be different ideas among each individual, but there will be harmony in thought, like a musical band where each musician plays a different instrument, but they produce a beautiful piece of music. Also, the ideas complement each other for the glory of Christ. It is clear that the Apostle Paul cared about this point as it is repeated in his letters "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Also: "fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." (Philippians 2:2-3). So, the Apostle is concerned that we avoid division in order to build the church without splits. Let the problems and pains of others become your own pains, so you would try to solve them as if they were your own. Seek ways to bring joy to others. As a practical application, everyone should seek ways to bring comfort, peace, and joy to others.

This can only happen if everyone is filled with the Holy Spirit. Then we will care about what others care about, think about what they think about, rejoice in their joy, and grieve in their grief.

**"Do not set your mind on high things"**: They were in Rome, the capital, and Paul feared they would become prideful from their contact with the great ones of Rome. They might seek personal glory, wealth of this world, its honors and dignities, seeking to associate with the rich and the great to benefit from them, as happens now with those who cling to influential people for their own benefit.

**"But associate with the humble"**: This means they should live with the simple people in the sacred atmosphere of the church, serving the sick, the poor, and the needy (James 2:1-7 & Philippians 2:5-7). They should share in their pains, be interested in the affairs of the church and its service. This path strengthens faith, fills us with the Spirit, and through it, we prepare for heaven.

**"Do not be wise in your own opinion"**: It is good to be wise, but it is harmful to think highly of ourselves (Proverbs 26:12). We should not reject advice and thereby ruin ourselves (Proverbs 15:12). We should not think highly of ourselves assuming that we possess knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, and that we do not need the help of others. It is worth noting that

when Moses' face shone, he did not even realize it (Exodus 34:29). The wise person in his own eyes lives arrogantly, refusing to accept advice from anyone. This advice, coming after the statement "**But associate with the humble,**" means that some may think it is wise to attach themselves to the powerful, the great, the influential, and the wealthy in order to benefit from them. But cursed is the one who relies on humans.

**Verse (17): "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men."**

**"Repay no one evil for evil"**: The laws of the world do not allow me to seek personal revenge against those who wrong me. If I were to take revenge and seek justice for myself, I would be held accountable and punished according to the law. According to worldly laws, if someone wrongs me, it is my responsibility to seek justice through the legal system and the system will punish who has wronged. As for God, He sees and knows everything. He is the King of kings, the Judge, and He is above all. He is just. So how can I take revenge for myself?

**"Have regard for good things in the sight of all men"**: This is similar to "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Therefore, let us be mindful to bear witness to God before others so that they may glorify Him.

**Verse (18): "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."**

Try, to the best of your ability, to live in peace with everyone. However, if people refuse, as was the case with Jeremiah, and they are contentious individuals, then there is nothing we can do about it. There are people with whom peace is impossible, such as the heretics.

**Verse (19): "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."**

**"Do not avenge yourselves"**: A true Christian does not seek revenge for themselves. If anyone believes they have the power to take revenge, God leaves him to himself. A true Christian behaves like a child, and when a child is hurt by someone, they go to their father, complaining. This is what I should do, go to God, complaining, if I feel that God is responsible for me.

**"But rather give place to wrath"**: This means giving room for God's wrath, allowing Him to take revenge on the wicked according to His mercy and judgment (Deuteronomy 32:35). In His wisdom, God solves our problems in ways we cannot imagine. Let us look at how God dealt with the Roman Empire that persecuted Christians, as He transformed it to embrace Christianity, as well as the case of Saul of Tarsus. This verse may also mean not being quick to respond to an offense, as the person who wronged you may calm down and see you as a gentle and peaceful individual. God does not seek revenge as humans do. He can turn my enemy into a loving person who comes to me, repentant for the wrong they have done.

**Verse (20): "Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a**

**drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'"**

**"If your enemy is hungry"**: Do not say that God has avenged me, but rather help him in his time of distress. This is how our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to "do good to those who hate you." The entire verse is taken from Proverbs 25:21-22.

**"you will heap coals of fire on his head"**: This may mean:

1. If you do this, you make them feel ashamed of their behavior and subject them to a strong conscience rebuke and regret, which is no less powerful and painful than the agony caused by placing fire on their head.
2. It could also mean igniting the fire of love in their heart through your actions towards them.
3. It is a customary practice in Upper Egypt that revenge against a killer can be forgiven if the person (who is sought to be killed) carries their own shroud and goes to the family of the victim. By doing this, the blood is spared, and peace is established. In Roman tradition, when someone wants to reconcile and end a blood feud, they would carry a fire on their head and approach their adversary. This act symbolizes offering oneself as a sacrifice and seeking to end the bloodshed. The adversary would accept the fire and place it on their own head as a sign of reconciliation.

**Verse (21): "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."**

This can only be achieved by those who hold onto Christ and can say that "For to me, to live is Christ. **"Overcome evil with good"** means responding to evil with patience, tolerance, and kindness towards the wrongdoer. Generally, everything that the Apostle asks for in this chapter becomes easier for those who have the new nature, as their members become instruments of righteousness.

# Chapter Thirteen

**Verse (1): "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."**

The words of the Apostle in chapter 12 were about the persecution of Christians by their own brothers and how to deal with it. Here, he speaks to me about the persecution by the state, as one might think that we should revolt against the state that persecutes us. Paul writes these words during the time of the Roman Empire, which persecuted Christians severely. The Apostle explains that the Christian must submit to the state that persecutes him and pray for it. The Christian prays for the king or the president and for the state, and it is God who deals with them. We do not understand the principle of revolting against the king or the president because they are appointed by God. The king may be unjust, but his existence is allowed by God for a wisdom known only to Him. Let us hear that God says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up" (Romans 9:17). The harshness and foolishness of Pharaoh were the cause of the Jews' faith in Yahweh, and even the Egyptians who came to know who Yahweh is. If God wants, He can change the hard heart of the king whenever He wants. The scripture says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21:1). Therefore, as long as the king and his decisions are in the hand of the Lord, let us leave the judgment in the hands of God, the ruler of all. Let us be content with prayer and let God do as He pleases, for the king is an instrument in the hand of God. Note that God may use the king to discipline His people, as an example of this is "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon."

And if Paul rejected the revolt of women against their husbands in removing their head coverings (1 Corinthians 11:1-16), does he allow for the revolt of Christians against the king? It should be noted that the Roman state was concerned about Christians due to their belief in Christ as their king. They did not understand the concept of heavenly kingship. Secondly, Christianity was not comfortable with the prevailing system of slavery, but even so, Christianity did not call for a slave revolt. Christianity does not rectify mistakes through revolutions, but through internal reforms. Thirdly, the Roman state had suffered from Jewish revolts. The Jews interpreted the commandment "You shall surely set a king over you...from among your brethren" (Deuteronomy 17:15) literally, and incited riots even in Rome against Caesar, leading to their expulsion from Rome by Claudius Caesar (Acts 18:2) around 49 AD. In general, the Jewish belief was that they awaited the Messiah to deliver them from Roman authority. They aimed to extend their influence over the entire world (and this is still their belief), and when they did not find this image in Christ, they crucified him. But the Christian understands that their focus is on heavenly matters (Colossians 3:1-2).

And thus, we do not aspire for global political positions because our Church is a divine institution, and we also do not care about the persecution that befalls us, and we do not revolt against those who oppress us. We submit to the president or king in everything except one thing, which is if they order us to abandon Christ. Note that the Romans viewed Christianity as a sect of Judaism, and because the Jews were rebelling against the state, the Romans thought that Christians were like them. And it is noteworthy that during the time when Nero persecuted the

Church, the Apostle Paul did not see that the Church should resist him. Instead, he saw that it was allowed by divine permission for the good of the Church. He even asked the Church to respond to his persecution with love, to pray for him, and to submit to him. Despite all this, Christians were accused of inciting sedition and causing unrest on the earth, so that their brutality would find justification. The slightest mistake committed by a Christian was met with immediate cruelty. Despite this, the Apostle says, "**Be subjects to governing authorities**" - here, submission does not mean weakness, but obedience to the Lord. For we do not fear people, but evil.

And the Christian feels that his life is not in the hands of the king, but in the hands of God, the ruler of all, who appointed the king. Therefore, we must submit to the king no matter how wicked he may be, and not only to the king but to the entire governing authority with him. This is consistent with the previous passage that said, "Do not repay evil with evil." The Church prays for the king, the president, and their advisors, so that the Lord may grant them wisdom and peace for the benefit of the Church. And "**the authorities that exist**", whether they are monarchies or republics, are **ordained by God**.

And this is why we submit to the ruling authorities. (Daniel 2:20, 21, 28, 37 + Daniel 4:17 + Jeremiah 27:6-8). The same idea can be found in these verses (1 Peter 2:13-17 + 1 Peter 2:21 + Titus 3:1 + 1 Timothy 2:1-4). Paul writes these words while he is in the hands of the Romans and bound in chains.

**Verse (2): "Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."**

God is the one who appoints the king, (Proverbs 8:15) through Him kings rule, so whoever opposes the king is opposing God.

**Verse (3): "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same."**

Whoever does good deeds does not fear the ruler, and whoever does evil deeds fears it.

**Verse (4): "For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."**

The ruler is a servant of God. God has placed the sword (punishment) in his hand to suppress all evil, so that chaos does not prevail.

**Verse (5): "Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake."**

We must submit to the ruler, not only out of fear but also for the sake of our conscience, because



God has appointed him. We must understand that we are not dealing with a great human being whom we fear because of his greatness, but rather we are dealing with God, who has commanded us to submit to the one He has appointed. Therefore, we submit even in secret, for the authority is God, and God sees us even if we are in hiding, and our conscience will revolt against us if we disobey God's commands. And the Holy Spirit within us corrects our conscience and makes it sensitive, and along the same lines, if I were to find a way to evade taxes, I should not exploit it.

**Verse (6): "For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing."**

**For you are accountable for this**, that is, for the conscience. And note that it is incumbent upon the Christian to be faithful in matters concerning taxes due.

**Verse (7): "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."**

Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. We must give those in power their rights, and this is our duty. **Tax** is a tax on land and property, and this type of tax is permanent and regular. **Customs** are paid from time to time according to the circumstances, and it is a specific tax on trade. **"Fear"** of the ruler because he implements the will of God. **"Honor"**: for everyone who is above us, including leaders, and for the father and mother according to their will.

**Verse (8): "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."**

The believer should not rest until he settles the debts that he owes. This is because it nullifies the causes of disputes, conflicts, hatred, and resorting to the judiciary.

**"Anything except to love one another"**, settling my debts gives me a sense of relief, but when it comes to Christ, this feeling will never happen. Christ has given me so much, so what have I offered to Him or what acts of love have I shown to His children?

The Christian believes that they are always indebted to God and to people, as they are children of God. This is expressed by the Apostle Paul when he said, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you" (Romans 1:14-15). The debt that Paul the Apostle carries on his shoulders is fulfilled through preaching, while the debt that I carry on my shoulders is fulfilled through serving God and serving people. A person will never find rest and will always feel indebted. God loved us, and we will live our lives by returning God's love through loving people, who are also children of God. This love for God and for people is the summary of the entire law (Matthew 22:35-40).

**Verses (9-10): "For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You**

**shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."**

The Apostle said in the previous verse that whoever loves others has fulfilled the law, and here he is asking why.

God created human beings in the Garden of Eden, and Eden is a Hebrew word that means joy. The meaning is that God, as a Father, intends for His children to live in joy. He created them in His image and placed them in a beautiful garden to rejoice in His presence forever. Adam experienced this joy when he loved God. Adam was created in the image of God, which is why he loved God. However, when Adam sinned, he hid from God, and this love was lost as he no longer saw God. Thus, joy was lost. The loss of joy is the meaning of being expelled from the Garden. Therefore, we notice the connection between joy and love.

The purpose of the law was to restore joy to humanity. "You gave me the law as an aid" - Gregorian Liturgy. God loves humanity and guides them towards the path of joy. The only way to experience true joy is by filling our hearts with genuine love for God. That is why Moses the prophet says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). The Son of God incarnated and completed redemption to restore joy to creation. He sent the Holy Spirit, who pours the love of God into our hearts (Romans 5:5). The fruits of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace..." (Galatians 5:22-23).

And let us note that there are two types of love:

1) **Agape Love:** This type of love is similar to the love of God, a love that does not seek anything in return. If found in a person, it is not according to human nature but is a gift from the Holy Spirit. This type of love is called "Agape" in Greek.

2) **Phileo Love:** This is human love that is based on instinct, such as one person loving another person. This type of love is variable, as one may love someone today and dislike them tomorrow due to a certain situation. This type of love is called "Phileo" in Greek and is considered a lower degree of love compared to Agape.

And whoever truly loves God will love all people. Love does not divide, meaning that true love cannot be directed towards one person while the heart hates another person (1 John 4:20 & 5:3). Therefore, there is a difference between the agape love and the human love. Agape love is the nature of the new creation that is renewed by the Holy Spirit.

As for the natural human before renewal, their love is only directed towards some people. This is what the Lord said about them, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48). The natural human loves those who love them and hates those who hate them. But the one who has been renewed by the Holy Spirit has become a new creation and will love everyone, even their enemies. This love is the nature of the new creation. This love is not divided; it is for God and for every creature of God.

Therefore, the presence of love for enemies in the heart is evidence of the new creation through which we are saved, and it is a sign that the person is spiritually alive (Galatians 6:15 & 1 John 3:14-15).

Therefore, someone who loves others cannot do harm to them. Love does not cause harm to one's neighbor, and based on that, one will treat others according to the commandments of the law. Referring to the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder..." Can I do this to someone I love or in the presence of God whom I love? Therefore, love fulfills the law. The summary of these commandments is to treat others as we would like to be treated, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This is the same teaching of the glorious Lord, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12). And whoever loves God will obey His commandments, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23). And as we have seen, one of the Lord's commandments is to love everyone (the Good Samaritan). Here, the Father and the Son dwell in us. And through this, joy is restored to us, just as God created Adam in the Garden of Eden and the law is fulfilled. Moreover, someone who is filled with God himself, who satisfies the heart, soul, emotions, and feelings, will not need the pleasures of the world and the body, and sin will not deceive them as it deceived Adam and Eve. Instead, their gaze will turn to heaven, desiring and eagerly awaiting it, and their joy will increase, no longer being occupied by the pains of this world or its pleasures.

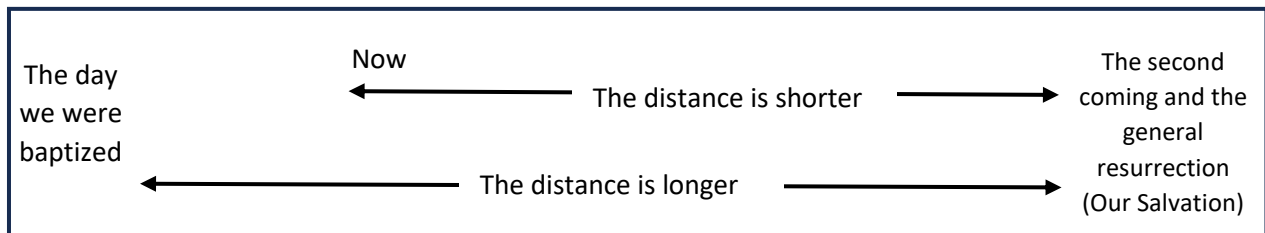
**Summary:** Why is **love the fulfillment of the law**?

- 1) Love allows us to regain the state of paradise, where joy is restored. This is what God intended from the beginning.
- 2) We regain the image of God, which is love, because God is love. Love is for God and for every creature of God.
- 3) Love is life. Through love, we transition from death to life. This is the will of God and the purpose of redemption.
- 4) The law was given to us as a means to help us regain this image and the state of paradise.

And here is an important question - Who did love more? Joseph or Potiphar's wife?

The love of Potiphar's wife towards Joseph was lust, and lust is self-centered, which means death. True love is modeled after the love of Christ for us, who offered redemption without expecting anything in return. It is a love that flows outward from Him towards humanity. However, lust seeks to fulfill its own desires and not the well-being of others. As for Joseph, he truly loved her. He did not expose or disgrace her, nor did he disclose what had happened to anyone. Moreover, he did not seek revenge when he attained a high position in Egypt. Joseph's love for God, his love for his master Potiphar, his faithfulness to him, and his love for his wife were genuine love, not driven by lust. In this way, the law was truly fulfilled.

**Verse (11): "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."**



"**Our salvation**" refers to the final salvation that will occur when the Lord Jesus comes in His second coming and we enter heaven with our glorified bodies.

Every day that passes brings us closer to our final salvation, which is the day of the final coming of Christ. But this day is a day of judgment for the wicked. Therefore, "**awake out of sleep**" refers to awakening from the slumber of ignorance, sin, and immersion in the desires of this world. Let us be faithful and loving towards everyone, and above all, towards God, because our days on earth are limited, and each day is shorter than the one before. This verse is similar to me telling my son, "My son, do your best, there are only a few days left until the exam." The call to "**awake out of sleep**" is a sign of the resurrection life and victory over sin (for sin is likened to sleep and death, as sin leads to neglecting the salvation of the soul, and if it persists, it causes spiritual death). Whoever wakes up and begins their struggle through prayer and worship, the hours of time are transformed into eternal accounts because they will live the eternal life from now on. They also transition from death to life, from the death of sin to a life in which Christ lives in them, thus moving from the darkness of the world to the eternal light. This verse aligns with the call of Christ to "watch" (Mark 13:35) as the bridegroom is at the door. Are we just one step away from heaven, yet we hesitate?

**Verse (12): "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."**

"**The night is far spent**" means that the end of the days characterized by sin is approaching. "**The day is at hand**" refers to the moment of the coming of Christ or my transition from this world. "**Cast off the works of darkness**" refers to abandoning sinful deeds that originate in darkness and thrive in darkness, leading to the darkness of Hell. "**Put on the armor of light**" means embracing Christ, who is the light, and utilizing the spiritual weapons mentioned in Ephesians 6 (prayer, faith, fasting, the Holy Scriptures). However, it requires a decision from me to walk with God, committed to His commandments. Do not think in your heart that sin is powerful, but rather that the weapons I have are stronger and make me hate sin. The present life resembles a dark night that is fading away, and the coming life is drawing near. This motivates us to carry our weapons for the battle against sin. But the day dawns in us when Christ, the Sun of righteousness, dwells in us (1 Corinthians 7:29, 1 Peter 4:7).

**Verse (13): "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy."**

This verse is the one that transformed Saint Augustine's life from a life of sin to holiness. He was in a garden with a friend when he heard a child's voice saying, "Take up and read." There happened to be a few pages with him, so Augustine took them and read from the letter to the Romans, specifically this verse. It was after this experience that he decided to change his life. The sins mentioned here are presented in pairs, as each one is connected to the other.

"**Let us walk properly**" means that indeed, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are fitting or appropriate for me as a Christian. "**As in the day**" means that let us walk as if everyone's eyes are watching our actions, as if it were in the clear light of day. So, let us walk

with etiquette, reverence, and propriety at all times, understanding that God's eyes are upon us both day and night.

**"In revelry and drunkenness"** refers to excessive indulgence in eating, going beyond limits, and engaging in boisterous and vulgar behavior. It is closely linked to **"lewdness and lust."** "In lewdness and lust" refers to engaging in immorality, fornication, and refers to places of sin. **"And lewdness"** refers to impurities of thoughts, emotions, dancing, gazes, words, and cheap literature. In fact, anything that leads to impurity. **"Not in strife and envy"** means that strife is a result of envy.

**Verse (14): "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."**

**"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ"** means to resemble or have the image of the Lord Jesus. In baptism, we are united with the mystical body of Christ, and we put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27). However, when we immerse ourselves in the sins of the world, we lose this image, and it is restored in us when we crucify our flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 2:20). As we are renewed, we draw closer to the image of the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 4:24, Galatians 4:19, 1 Corinthians 15:49). There is a symbol of this in the Old Testament when God clothed Adam with the skin of the sacrifice. Christ lives in us, enters us, and becomes the visible in us while we are hidden in Him. He manifests Himself in every action (Ephesians 3:14-18). Here, the person of the night vanished, and the person of the light appeared. Christ in me gives me His virtues that manifest in me: love, kindness, gentleness, and humility. When I embody all these qualities, I have indeed put on the Lord Jesus.

Everything except Christ is like withered leaves that do not cover; without Him, we are distorted and naked. This signifies that the fig leaves did not provide covering for Adam and Eve; they needed the skin of the sacrifice. Therefore, in baptism, we put on Christ. Let us continue to wear Christ with sincerity and truth, with a love for virtue and a hatred for evil, distancing ourselves from it. Let us train ourselves in purity, mortifying our desires and adhering to Him throughout the day (which is what we call struggle).

And those who put on the Lord Jesus **will not make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts** means not immersing oneself in excessive desires and not seeking to arouse the old nature by indulging in the desires of the flesh. It means not being entangled and pursuing the pleasures of this world. This does not contradict taking care of the necessary needs of the body, but it means not eagerly pursuing the pleasures of this world. Those who walk in the Spirit will not fulfill the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).

# Chapter Fourteen

Saint John Chrysostom sees that Paul here is addressing a problem that arose among the converted Jews, where some feared that in eating meat they would eat pork or camel meat without knowing it, thus breaking the law. Since their conscience was doubtful, they demonstrated fasting and austerity and refrained from eating meat altogether. While others realized that in Jesus Christ they had gained freedom from literal rituals, they began to eat any meat. They entered into intellectual conflict and discussions with their brothers who were demonstrating fasting, who were actually weak in faith. The apostle did not want to enter into this conflict but thought that the matter of eating was too trivial to occupy the minds and time of Christians. However, it is important that there be no conflict, but rather that love should prevail. The apostle revealed the weakness of those who doubted because of their long practice of the Mosaic law and found it difficult to get rid of it. At the same time, he attacked the strong who despised their weak brothers. We note that Peter himself did not find it easy to abandon Jewish customs, for he refrained from eating with the nations when Jews entered upon him (Gal 2:12). God had to show him the vision until he accepted to baptize Cornelius and accept him in faith (Acts 10: 11-16).

The conflict may have arisen between the faction of converted Jews and the Gentiles over the eating of meat forbidden by the law. The converted Gentile despised the Jew for his refusal to eat meat due to his doubts.

Another problem that the Apostle discussed in the Epistle to Corinthians (1 Cor 8-10) is the problem of meats that were offered at the feasts and occasions of the pagans in their temples. There was a group that refrained from eating meat because the pagans, after offering their sacrifices to their gods, would sell this meat in butcher shops. Therefore, those in doubt refrained completely from eating meat and drinking wine, lest there be among them what was offered in the temples of the idols.

Most likely, the Apostle discusses in this chapter (Romans 14) the food forbidden to Jews, as he says one person esteems one day above another, and another esteems every day (referring to Jewish holidays and the Sabbath). As for (1 Corinthians 8), he discusses the meats of the pagan temples.

There is another problem specifically related to meat, which is specific to the Essenes group who completely forbade eating meat. Most likely, the Apostle does not refer to them.

**Verse (1): "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things."**

There are some Christians who are weak in their faith and base their salvation on the distinction between types of food, and between day and day. The church should accept everyone with compassion. **"Not to disputes over doubtful things"** = meaning without condemning their thoughts, for judgment is God's work, so let's leave it to Him. However, this does not apply to the doctrine, for anyone who teaches a teaching contrary to our faith, the church must resist him. Let's look at the revolution of the Apostle Paul himself in his letter to the Galatians when wrong thoughts entered among them.

In general, the Church is a hospital for the treatment of every sick person, not a court to condemn

people. Accordingly, it is fitting for a Christian to be gentle with his brother who is weak in faith, to support him with a spirit of love, not condemnation, so that everyone walks in the path of salvation. The Apostle here calls for us to leave minor matters and turn to what is for edification. It is amazing that Paul, the strong one, submitted to these things. He vowed himself with the Jewish vow and circumcised Timothy to win over the weak, he became a Jew to the Jew to win them over (1 Cor 9:19-22).

Here in the letter to the Romans, we see Paul is not concerned about whether the believer adheres to a day or a type of food or does not adhere. However, in the letter (Colossians 2: 8 & 16) he completely prohibited this Jewish control and did so in Galatia, but why? The reason is that the people of Rome are new to the faith, so he does not want to confuse them until he himself arrives and teaches the correct doctrine that elevates them above the level of Jewish laws. Rome does not have apostles teaching the simple people, while Colossi and Galatia are churches that have been established and have bishops and priests teaching them. The people of Rome are new to the faith, and he does not want to make them doubt because of their past in faith, as they are simple. As for Colossi and Galatia, he is strict with the teachers who call for Judaism first before entering Christianity. Paul considers that someone of Jewish origin will suffer from the pressure of his conscience due to his upbringing. So, the Apostle Paul does not look closely at what this Christian does in Rome with scarce information about the correct faith, to relieve his conscience that has been formed for a long time under the law. As for the Christian who is originally pagan and has no previous connection with the law, and these Judaizers came to him from the teachers and convinced him to start first with Jewish practices as a means of salvation, these are attacked by the Apostle Paul as he did with the people of Galatia and Colossi. The people of Rome did what they did out of weakness because of their past with the law and Judaism, while the people of Galatia did it out of obstinacy and resistance. It is as if Paul wanted to gradually bury the ceremonial law, so the people of Rome were mourning it to its grave with sadness and crying, and Paul was bearing them with patience. As for the people of Galatia, they were digging up its grave, so he attacked them. **"Accept him"** = He is accepted by God, so accept him in love and keep away from discussions that confuse him, because anyone with knowledge tends to inflate on his brothers. The Apostle called the one with scarce information about the correct faith **"weak in faith"**.

**Verse (2): "For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables."**

**"May eat all things"**: God told Peter "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15). So, the one strong in faith believes that he has gained freedom from literal rituals in Christ and eats without doubt. This is the teaching of the Lord Jesus, who did not forbid eating anything, for eating does not defile, but defilement comes from within the person (Matthew 15:11). **"But he who is weak eats only vegetables"** = for fear of eating meats that may be forbidden like pork (or offered to idols), thus breaking the law. The law forbade certain meats of animals, fish, and birds, but it did not forbid legumes. Although this behavior has narrow-mindedness, we must accept it and not condemn it.

**Verse (3): "Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him."**

Here we find the Apostle warning against a flattering temptation, as the strong feel their strength and despise the weak with little knowledge and understanding. In the same concept of this verse, the celibate should not despise the married and the married should not condemn the celibate, for God accepts this and that. God does not break a bruised reed, so if God accepts him, should I reject him? And **"let not him who does not eat judge him who eats"** = he should not consider him a gluttonous lawbreaker.

**Verse (4): "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand."**

**"Who are you to judge another's servant?":** Here he addresses his words to the weak who condemn the strong because they eat, considering them gluttonous and fallen. Also, the speech is directed to the strong in faith who mocks the concepts of the weak with little knowledge. This recklessness in judgment is what James meant when he said, "Do not be many teachers.." because by judging our brothers we make ourselves their masters. The Lord alone is the master of all, and we are all his servants. And if the other is not my servant but God's, why should I judge him, God judges him. **"To his own master he stands":** If he stands firm in his faith, his master will gain him, and his fall is a loss to his master. So, the matter is specific to God who longs to win everyone. We may think that God will not accept those who act freely or will reject those who doubt. But God is able to establish one in his integrity and the other in the peace of his conscience= **"for God is able to make him stand"** = For he does not just accept him but establishes him in Christ to be saved. In fact, God is able to correct the weak concepts and convince him (Jeremiah 20:7). Or to send someone to explain to him and convince him, as he sent Peter to Cornelius, and sent Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch.

**Verse (5): "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind."**

Here he speaks about the Sabbath, feasts, seasons, and Jewish fasts. Jewish converts still respect the days of Passover and the new moon... and the Gentiles who believed in Christ respect Sunday instead of the Sabbath that the Jews sanctify. **"Let each be fully convinced in his own mind"** = meaning his conscience and mind should judge in this matter and that. And he should make his decision without doubt or skepticism. Everyone according to the light in his heart and everyone according to his conviction.

**Verse (6): "He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks."**

Here the Apostle raises the sight of the Romans from the Christians instead of being preoccupied with condemning each other, they should thank God, so Christians care to thank God when eating. **"He who observes the day"** = Whoever considers a day holier than the rest of the days,



as the Jews consider the Sabbath holy, he respects and sanctifies the Sabbath only because God commanded it. Here Paul says such a person cares about the day because in his heart he considers it to glorify the Lord. "**And he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it**" = that is, he does not specify a certain day. So, whoever does not care about the Sabbath or anything else, feeling that Christ has freed him from these rituals, he does not care because he glorifies the Lord. "**He who eats,... gives thanks**" = feeling that the Lord has given him the freedom to eat everything. "**And he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks**" = on the rest of the food and blessings that God has given him. And we Christians fast and pray for God to accept this fast as a sacrifice of thanks, not because there is forbidden food.

**Verses (7-8): "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."**

In an amazing wisdom, the Apostle pulled both parties from the discussion in these matters to elevate their thoughts, and our thoughts, above the realm of eating and drinking and temporal works that are specific to this time, to a higher faith and life horizon. St. Paul elevates Christian faith above the works of this time to place the Christian person in his final position with Christ, who embraces everyone in his person. All life should be for the sake of Christ who created me and redeemed me and bought me with precious blood (1 Cor 7:23 + Rev 5:9 + 1 Pet 1:18-19). And we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. The seal is God's mark of ownership for us (2 Cor 1:21-22 + Eph 1:13). Our whole life, whether material or spiritual, is to glorify Christ and do His will "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16). And let's note that God created everything for the glory of His name (Isa 43:7).

And in death, we go to Christ, which is much better. We were created for good works to glorify God (Eph 2:10), and after we finish our works we die to start a different kind of life in which we praise Christ and glorify Him in another way (2 Cor 5:14-15). We no longer live as we want according to our desires and pleasures, and we no longer fear death. Christ died and rose to give us life. So, we consider ourselves indebted to Him with our lives, whether in our presence in this present world or our departure from it. We are no longer our own property (Philemon 21:1). The will of Christ has become our law and the glory of Christ our goal. We live, die and bear witness in order to glorify Him in all the actions of our life. Christ is the center where all lines of life and death meet. True Christianity is that which makes Christ everything in all. Therefore, as long as we belong to Christ, whether alive or dead, all our works must be done for God and not for ourselves or out of stubbornness, for we are not for ourselves but for God. These verses 7 and 8 conclude the section that talks about respecting opinions and that each member complements the rest of the members, they live in love and cooperation as everyone lives for God, everyone is heading in one direction for one goal, so why the quarrel on the way. Whoever lived loving his brothers, he lives for the Lord. So, sincere love is a living application of faith.

**Verse (9): "For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living."**

Christ died and rose to be king over all (Eph 1:22). So how can we despise someone who is one with us in Christ, and Christ reigns over both of us. If Christ died and gave himself for people, how can we grieve the one for whom Christ died (Verse 15)? If Christ died to accept all, do we reject people because they eat or do not eat? The important thing is to win souls, this is what Christ wants. And we should be preoccupied with the one who died and rose instead of being preoccupied with condemnation. And we surrender our feelings to Him because condemnation: -

1. Corrupts our depths as it carries contempt for brothers instead of a broad heart for them.
2. Offends God by making oneself a deity for people, whereas it is He who all should submit to as the ultimate authority.
3. Causes others to stumble.

**Verse (10): "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."**

Because we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we should not show contempt for anyone (who does not eat) or judge anyone (who eats). The "seat" here refers to the judgment seat, as Christ is the Judge (John 5:22).

**Verse (11): "For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.'"**

In the context of Isaiah 45:23, where it is written, "I have sworn by myself," we understand that when God says, "As I live," the Lord Himself is speaking, and by this, God is making an oath. The exclusive privilege that God possesses is that He is alive in Himself. In comparison to Philippians 2:10-11, we find that Paul applies the idea that every knee will bow to Christ, indicating that Christ is God. Here, Paul directs the thoughts of his listeners to focus on standing before the throne of the Lord instead of being preoccupied with condemning others. In other words, let us be preoccupied with the day when we will stand before God instead of being preoccupied with condemning one another.

**Verse (12): "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."**

Each of us will be accountable to God for oneself, not for others.

**Verse (13): "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."**

Based on this, let us refrain from judging one another. Judging others puts stumbling blocks and obstacles in front of them, causing them to stumble or fall. Instead of judging others and causing them to stumble, let us focus on removing any obstacles from their path with love. Let us remove the barriers of love by refraining from eating anything that may cause them to stumble, even if it

is permissible for us to eat for the sake of their weakness (1 Corinthians 8:13 & 1 Corinthians 9:19).

**Verse (14): "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."**

The creation of God is pure, and if we eat it without doubting (Mark 7:14-15). However, if someone doubts and considers something unclean and still eats it, they are contradicting their own conscience, which accuses them, and therefore that thing becomes unclean for them. (The Church fasts not because the food is unclean, as we return to eating it after fasting, but we fast to discipline and train the body well under the guidance of the Holy Spirit).

**"I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus"**: this conviction has united me with Christ. With this principle here, the Apostle stands in the position of the converted Jew whose conscience has been shaped by the law, considering certain foods as unclean. If they were to eat these foods, they would indeed become unclean for them because they would be contradicting their conscience. He also stands in the position of the strong Gentile believers, for nothing is inherently unclean.

**Verse (15): "Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died."**

Love is much more important than being convinced that it's okay to eat lawful meat and cause someone to stumble. If by eating certain foods you cause your brother to grieve (he may even revert to Judaism and be destroyed), or he thinks ill of you and doubts that you are despising his faith and is destroyed because of his weakness, or he imitates you and eats what he considers unclean, against his conscience and is destroyed (Verse 23). Thus, you are no longer walking in love because you continue to consume food that causes your brother, **for whom Christ died**, to grieve = thus you are destroying a soul for which Christ died, for if Christ gave himself for your brother, shouldn't you give something less and leave food? Paul himself implemented this principle, despite not being convinced of circumcision, he circumcised Timothy so as not to cause the Jews, whom Timothy served among them, to stumble. This principle applies to anyone who causes people to stumble in what they believe is right and is the reason for them attacking their Christianity.

**Verse (16): "Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil"**

Your thoughts and beliefs about eating freely are good, but your weak brother will stumble over you and slander you, saying that you are not good and will speak ill of you. We may not be able to prevent slander, but we must not be the cause of it.

**Verse (17): "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."**

**The kingdom of God** refers to when God reigns over the heart and a person submits their heart to God's authority. In that state, a person will not be concerned with eating and drinking, meaning that their joy and happiness will not be dependent on specific foods or drinks. Our abstaining from certain foods will not cause us to lose our joy. In the kingdom of God, we live with Christ a heavenly life in the kingdom of heaven. The Holy Spirit fills us and enables us to live in righteousness, peace, and joy. This means that we prioritize living a righteous life, our hearts are filled with peace, and we experience true joy. Therefore, if we give up food for the sake of our brothers and sisters, we will not lose anything.

**Note:** The term "**kingdom of God**" is used in the context of the New Testament, distinguishing it from the Old Testament covenant of the law.

**Verse (18): "For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men."**

"**For**" is a clarification and affirmation of what was mentioned before. "**In these things**" refers to anyone who has listened to my teachings in this chapter and has taken care not to be a stumbling block to others, and has not stubbornly opposed, **they have served Christ**. By not being a cause for anyone to perish whom Christ has redeemed with His blood. And whoever lives serving Christ, being a peacemaker among people, will be called "blessed" by the Lord of glory, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). Moreover, their heart is filled with **righteousness, peace, and joy**. And this righteousness, peace, and joy are because he is **acceptable to God**.

And they will also be **approved by men**, meaning they will be loved and recognized by people, and their success in the test before God and people will be witnessed. This is what was said about those who "overcome" (Revelation 2:7 & 11 & 17).

**Verse (19): "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another."**

Let our goal be to preserve peace within the church and maintain its unity, avoiding divisions. There is no building of the church without love, and no establishment of God's work without peace. Let the strong bear with the weak so that the church may be built up.

**Verse (20): "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense."**

"**Do not destroy the work of God**" refers to the fact that God's work was the sacrifice that established the Church, the temple of His body. He continues to work for the building of the Church (verse 19). Human disputes, on the other hand, destroys what God is building. The meaning of the verse is that one should not allow non-essential matters in worship (such as food) to hinder or obstruct the work of salvation that God has orchestrated for the sake of one's brother. The Apostle had previously said not to let one's eating be a cause for the destruction of one's

brother. Here, it is said not to be a cause for the destruction of the work of God. Can I destroy a person chosen by God through my actions, or undermine what God is building? Certainly, this is not permissible. If I do so, I would be aligning myself with Satan, who seeks the destruction of all and the destruction of every building. Instead, I would be against God, who desires the salvation of all, and I would be resisting God. Note that the Apostle refers to believers as the work of God and calls them in 1 Corinthians 3:9 "God's field" and "God's building and temple" highlighting their significance. **"It is evil for the man who eats with offense"** means:

1. For a person to eat with a doubtful conscience, this person will become stumbled.
2. If someone eats in front of a Jewish person who is doubtful, it becomes a stumbling block for them.

**Verse (21): "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak."**

It is commendable to eat with strong faith, but it is even more commendable not to do anything that causes your brother to stumble. Meat and wine are not essential for human life, but the well-being of our brother is of utmost importance. The Apostle Paul expressed a similar concept regarding the issue of meat sacrificed to idols, saying, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." (1 Corinthians 8:13).

**Verse (22): "Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves."**

**Do you have faith** (a strong conviction in matters of food)? It is good to keep this faith within yourself and let only God know about it. Do not boast about your strong faith to those whose faith is still weak. In this context, the word **"faith"** does not refer to faith in Christ that justifies, as that must be declared. Rather, the Apostle here refers to the concept of faith – the freedom we have been given to be released from the law and have proper understanding. However, this freedom may cause doubt in others. **"Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves"** (similar to 1 John 3:21). Blessed is the person who does not feel guilty when engaging in something that has been carefully examined and approved. But it is extremely dangerous for a person to allow themselves to do something against their conscience for the sake of pleasure or personal gain, as their conscience will rebuke them. If their conscience rebukes them for something and they still do it, it is a challenge to God and a disregard for His commandments.

**"Blessed is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves"** - this verse should be before us when making any decision. As long as I do not choose a wrong path, I am rational and free, and it is my right to make my own decisions as I wish. Let us trust in God's protection from the consequences. If the decision is wrong after careful consideration and consultation, God is able to protect me from the consequences of that decision. As for seeking advice, the scripture says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15).

**Verse (23): "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."**

Anyone who eats while being doubtful is condemned because they do not eat from faith. This is what the Apostle referred to as weak faith. Therefore, this is the extent of their faith. By eating, they challenge what they believe to be the path to their salvation. They allow their desires to overpower what they believe in. In doing so, they damage the balance of their own salvation. If their actions contradict their conscience, their conscience will cry out on the Day of Judgment, accusing and protesting against them. Their conscience will be a witness against them because they ate and drank according to their desires, going against what they believe in their conscience. Anything that is not done with conviction and inner faith is considered a sin.

# Chapter Fifteen

The previous chapter focused on the issue of permissible and forbidden foods, and emphasized that no one should cause their brother to stumble or condemn their brother, but rather we should prioritize love over knowledge. We should accept simple things, but this does not apply to matters of faith. It is not valid for the church to accept a distorted faith under the pretext of love. Examples of what we can accept with love include tolerance in personal matters, not in matters of doctrine. As the Lord said, "But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." and "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two." This is to win your brother for faith. Another example is personal behavior, and the way people choose to present themselves. Let us accept others as they are, with their weaknesses, and trust that God is able to change them. Their presence among the church community will help them in their transformation.

The previous chapter's summary is that we should overlook minor matters that concern weak and doubting individuals in order to win them over to Christ, but not at the expense of compromising our own faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 1:3).

But this previous chapter starts with what the apostle calls the mystery of Christ, which is the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church along with believing Jews. And here, the apostle requests that everyone live in love, unity, and harmony, so that the Holy Spirit may be poured out upon them. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron.

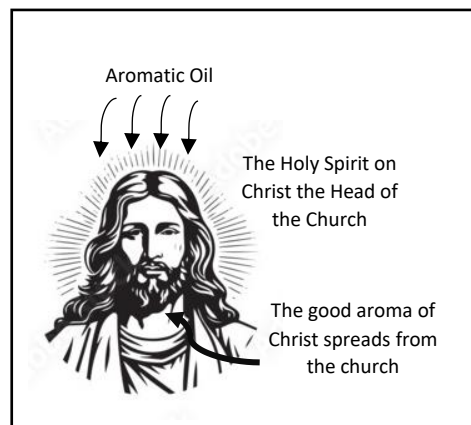
(Psalm 133:1-2)

1. The oil (symbol of the Holy Spirit) and the sweet aroma (symbol of Christ - 2 Corinthians 2:15). And the beard represents the church gathered in love. From it emanates the sweet aroma of Christ that attracts others.

2. Every member in the church has a specific role (a certain note). If everyone had the same thought, they would all be in harmony. Each person carries out their role, and the sweet voice of Christ emerges from this church - attracting others.

3. Everyone has their own talent, and let it be known that each talent has a color from the spectrum. If everyone were to focus on using their talent for the glory of the name of Christ, the colors of the spectrum would come together and produce the color white, the color of Christ, the Sun of righteousness.

Here we see the church gathered from nations and Jews, and the apostle says that it is upon the church, that is, every member within it, to accept one another with an open heart, being patient with the weaknesses of the weak, regardless of their past. In doing so, the church will emit the sweet voice, fragrance, and color of Christ.



**Verse (1): "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves."**

**"We then who are strong"** - It is God who has given us strong faith, and it is our duty to uphold this faith. **"ought to bear with the scruples of the weak"** - For God has come down to us, carrying our weaknesses, in order to elevate us to the perfection of His strength, glory, and majesty. Therefore, let us bear the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters, just as Christ bore ours, for He does not break a bruised reed (but note that we should not accept a distorted faith). "and not to please ourselves" - It is incumbent upon us not to simply do what pleases our own souls, but to consider the needs and well-being of others.

**Verse (2): "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification."**

We are called to do what pleases others, for their benefit, building them up and fostering their growth in virtue, and not for the sake of sin.

**Verse (3): "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."**

Christ, for our sake, was incarnated, lived poor, and suffered. He had nowhere to lay his head, lived on assistance, rejected kingship, obeyed even unto the cross, and washed feet. He emptied Himself, bearing our weaknesses. So, the one who had all the glory before this, should I not accept Him to gain my brother?

Rather, as it is written: **"The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."**

1. They said to Christ on the cross, "If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." and "He saved others but not Himself", but Christ endured the reproaches on the cross to fulfill the Father's will in the salvation of humanity. And because the Father and the Son are one, every reproach against the Son because of the cross is a reproach against the Father who willed the cross. All these reproaches are sins that Christ bore on the cross.
2. Rather, all the sins of the world are directed towards the person of the Father, and on the cross, Christ endured all these reproaches and insults that the world directed towards the person of the Father. Christ died crucified to bear the sins of all, in addition to the reproaches directed towards his own person. The verse is from Psalm 69:9-10. The meaning of Paul's statement to them is that you, the strong, have become strong because Christ endured the reproaches (to the Father and to Himself), bearing your weaknesses and the shame of your sins. Therefore, let us, the weak, support one another as Christ did with us.

Due to the sins of the Jews, God would discipline them by delivering them into the hands of the nations in wars. The nations would mock their God (Yahweh) when they fought against the Jews and defeated them, saying, "Our god has defeated your God, Yahweh." These were the thoughts of the pagan peoples, that the gods were the ones who fought and triumphed. And these reproaches against God were borne by Christ on His cross.

4. And even now, all our sins are reproaches that He bears, that is why He said, "Let your good works shine before men, that they may glorify your Father in heaven." When we make mistakes, do not unbelievers in Christ say about us, "These are the actions of Christ's followers"? And unbelievers in God, like atheists for example, say, "These are the actions of believers in God."



**Verse (4): "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."**

"**For whatever things were written**" refers to the psalm mentioned in verse 3 and others, but it also includes everything written in the Old Testament, which was written for our instruction. The Old Testament is not merely a collection of stories and teachings, but it is a symbol of Christ and a testimony to Him. It is meant to teach us, warn us, and comfort us in times of pain, so that we may hold onto the hope that is connected with patience and the strengthening that the Scriptures provide.

**Verses (5-6): "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

The apostle here pauses for prayer because preaching and admonition without prayer becomes ineffective and futile. Preaching addresses the ear, but God addresses the heart. We notice that in verse 4, the apostle attributes patience and comfort to the Scriptures and attributes them here to God as their source. He is the God of patience and comfort. The source is God, but they are also conveyed to us through the Holy Scriptures. Paul's prayer is for them **to be like-minded**, which means harmony of thought where no one thought dominates over another. This word signifies harmony (one-mindedness), and in music, harmony means having multiple tones and voices from different instruments, but they sound as one voice, creating a beautiful melody from diverse tones that are in harmony. If we all have the mind of Christ and a common goal of glorifying Christ, this harmony occurs.

For example, there are multiple activities for servants within the church, and each servant has a distinguishing activity (such as spiritual songs, Bible studies, teaching, church history, rituals, administration, serving the sick and elderly, helping with school lessons, etc.). If everyone fulfills their role seeking the glory of Christ, which is the one common thought, harmony occurs, and Christ is manifested in the church. If this happens, we would be "**according to Christ Jesus**," meaning in accordance with His will. And by doing so, **we glorify God**. Just as we pray "Hallowed be Your name," God is glorified when we serve Him, worship Him, and praise Him with one spirit and one mouth, meaning having one thought without division or conflict. "**With one mind**" signifies unity of will, and the goal of Christ is unity among believers (John 17:21-23). "**With one mouth**" means acknowledging God's truth and praising Him with our mouths. Here, we see united hearts and united voices driven by love, with the goal of glorifying God, and this is what God desires. The **soul** expresses the inner being, and **the mouth** expresses what appears before people. When the apostle says "**one**," it means that as the people of Christ, we have one goal in our hearts and declare it to everyone.

**Verse (7): "Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."**

"**Receive one another**" - If Christ received us, should we not also receive one another? Christ

forgave us in a measure of 10,000 talents (equivalent to between 2 million and 60 million pounds, depending on whether the talent is gold or silver). Should we not also forgive our brethren in a measure of 100 denarii (equivalent to 3 pounds)? Christ received us and established us in Him to restore us as children of the Father, that we may glorify His name - to the glory of God. And God is glorified when we confess Christ and believe in Him inwardly and outwardly. Therefore, let the strong receive the weak, and let the weak receive the strong. Let the Jews receive the Gentiles, and let the Gentiles receive the Jews. **receive one another** this mean accept **one another**.

**Verse (8): "Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers"**

**"Servant"** - Christ came to serve, not to be served. **"Servant to the circumcision"** - This means that Christ fulfilled and completed the requirements of the Law, including circumcision. He himself was from the Jewish people who practiced circumcision (He came to his own, but his own did not receive him). So how can the Jews and even Christ himself be despised if he adhered to their law? **"For the truth of God"** - God made a promise to Abraham, and Christ came to fulfill this promise and to bear the wrath for those who had fallen away from the covenant among the descendants of Abraham. In this verse, we see Christ accepting the Jews, and in the following verses, we see him accepting the Gentiles. Therefore, if Christ accepted both the Jews and the Gentiles and brought them together in himself, let each one accept the other.

**Verse (9): "and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: 'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.'"**

Here we see God accepting the Gentiles. **"And that the Gentiles might glorify God"** - By their faith in Christ. They glorify Him because of His mercy towards them, as He accepted them - **"for His mercy"** - This was also foretold in Psalm 18:49, prophesying that the Gospel would be preached among the Gentiles and the Gentiles would praise Christ for His mercy. **"I will confess to You"** - Here, Christ, as the head of His Church, speaks in the name of His Church from among the Gentiles and directs His people to praise and thank the Father.

**Verse (10): "And again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!'"**

The Jews did not allow the Gentiles to participate in their festivals, but through Christ, everyone became partners in the sufferings and joys of the Church. They became partners in praising God (Deuteronomy 32:43).

**Verse (11): "And again: 'Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!'"**

This is from (Psalm 117:1). The nations used to praise their gods, but now they praise God.

**Verse (12): "And again, Isaiah says: 'There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope.'"**

This is from Isaiah 1:11. The prophecy of Isaiah means that Jesse's descendant, which is a new branch, will be like the root. The Christ who will come from this root will be believed in by the nations. And the verses from Isaiah 11:1 & 10 (Septuagint).

**Verse (13): "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."**

In the previous verses (8-12), we saw that God accepts both the Jews and the Gentiles. God accepted both of them, so it is necessary for them to accept one another and live in love. And when everyone is filled with love, they will be filled with the Holy Spirit, which will bring joy and hope to all.

**"God of hope"**: God desires to give His people hope so that they do not despair amidst the hardships in the world. And how does He give us this hope? **The Holy Spirit** gives us a foretaste of the **joy and peace** we will experience in heaven, even now while we are still in the world.

**"That you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"**: As our joy and peace increase, our hope also increases. When we taste the heavenly peace and joy as a pledge now while we are still on earth, our hope grows in anticipation of being filled with even more joy and happiness when we enter into glory. This happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and the Apostle explains to us the way to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-21). And this verse aligns with "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5).

**Verse (14): "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."**

We observe the tenderness in the discourse here, after previously warning and admonishing them. This is to encourage and describe them as being **"full of goodness"** after stating that the Gentiles were filled with all unrighteousness before faith (Romans 1:29-31). However, grace changes one's state. Despite only hearing about them, he expresses his confidence, "Love believes all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7). He attributes to them the gift of speech and admonition, that they are **able to warn and admonish one another**.

**Verse (15): "Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God"**

**"More boldly"**: This stems from the intensity of his zeal and love for them. **"On some points"**: The meaning is that in certain parts of the letter, the apostle was more daring towards them (especially in chapters 1-3).

**"As reminding you"**: Notice the humility of the apostle as he tells them that they already know

everything he has written, but he has written to remind them. And even now, after 2000 years, we are still trying to understand this message.

**Verse (16): "that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."**

It is an extension of verse 15, as the grace that God bestowed upon him was given to him to serve the Gentiles - **"that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles."** **"Ministering the gospel of God"** Paul, as a priest (**Minister** here means priest as it came in other translations) was entrusted with the priesthood through the laying on of hands by God's choice, along with Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3). He emphasized the idea of being a priest, as the role of a priest is to offer sacrifices (blood sacrifices in the Old Testament, and the Eucharist in the New Testament). He stated that he offers the Gentiles living sacrifices with a mental knife (spiritual worship). The imagery that Paul the Apostle portrays here is that he offers the Gentiles as a sacrifice through the Word of God, which is a double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12), working in them and transforming them into a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God. Therefore, Paul the Apostle is depicted in the West holding in his hand the sword, which is the sword of the Word. He offers the Gentiles as a sacrifice to become acceptable, like an offering presented by the apostle, holy and acceptable through the Holy Spirit. This includes not only their faith but also their behavior guided by the Spirit.

The term **"as a priest"** is used by Protestant who deny the sacrament of priesthood to refute Paul's apostleship and priesthood in general. They claim that he is likening himself to an Old Testament priest who offers blood sacrifices, but in reality, he is offering the Gentiles as living sacrifices, as mentioned before. However, when he says, "as a priest," it means that he is not actually a priest. But when they interpret what the apostle said in Romans 1:21 about the Gentiles, "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" do we then say that Paul means that God is like God, but He is not a real God? !

**Verses (17-18): "Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient."**

**"I have reason to glory in Christ"** - Paul boasts in his priesthood and service that God has given him. He does not boast in himself, but in his priesthood, preaching, and the fact that God entrusted him with this service. He considers it an honor to work for God.

**Story:** A young priest went to his spiritual father expressing regret for leaving his important job in the world. His spiritual father replied, "What have you left? You have left rubbish and taken up the glory of serving at the altar and carrying the body of Christ in your hands." Here, Paul does not focus on the insults directed at him, but rather on his faith and hope in the glory prepared for him. When he says, **"in Christ,"** it signifies that Christ alone is the true High Priest, and there is no priesthood apart from Christ. There is no shepherd except in Christ and for the sake of Christ. Jesus Christ is the true High Priest, as He offers His own Eucharistic sacrifice

daily on the altar, and we, the priests, are merely instruments in His hands, praying and distributing the blessings of His body and blood. **"In the things which pertain to God"** - the work, preaching, service, and salvation of souls, all of these are the work of God, and God upholds the message and preaching.

**Verse (19): "in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."**

**"by the power of the Spirit of God"** - This is what made the preaching effective. **"Illyricum"** - It is a region located east of the Adriatic Sea, mostly in present-day Bulgaria. He is explaining and presenting his ministry to them, asking for their prayers. And we notice that God supported and endorsed him through the work of miracles as well.

**Verse (20): "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation"**

He does not seek fame, glory, or easy service. Instead, he desires to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring the message of the gospel to the entire pagan world that had not been reached before him. He does not want to trespass on the rights of others and take away their rightful labor and achievements. Based on this verse, it can be inferred that **Peter** was not present in Rome and did not establish the church in Rome.

**Verse (21): "but as it is written: 'To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand.'"**

I preach the gospel among the Gentiles and idol worshipers, so that the gospel may reach every person and fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 15:52). Therefore, I am searching for a place where Christ has not been preached so that I can go there.

**Verse (22): "For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you."**

Here, the apostle expresses his longing to go to them in Rome. But God was assigning him to preach in places that were in greater need of the word than Rome. Divine providence governs matters of service and preaching. God knows who is in greater need. God knew that in Rome there were people who knew Christ, but there were still many places that had not heard about Christ.

**Verse (23): "But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you"**

The apostle was speaking from Greece and he saw that he had preached in most of its regions.

He now had a strong desire to go to Rome, the capital of the pagan world at that time.

**Verse (24): "whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while."**

**"Whenever I go to Spain"**: the fires of preaching passion burn within him, and he wants to serve the gospel to the whole world. **"May enjoy your company"** in other translations the word comes as a word that parents say to their children, expressing intense love. Also, its meaning "I want to fill my eyes with you" and it means that I will enjoy meeting you. **"For a while"** means that no matter how long he stays among them, he can never satisfy himself from seeing them, and no matter how much he looks at them, his satisfaction will be partial.

**Verse (25): "But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints."**

**"To minister to the saints"** - He did not say to give to them, but what he is doing is serving. In this, he apologizes for not coming to Rome because he is busy serving the poor in Jerusalem, whose goods were plundered there (Hebrews 10:34). It is not strange that there are poor people in Jerusalem. This may have arisen from a famine that occurred during the days of Emperor Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28-30). And this famine particularly affected Israel.

**Verse (26): "For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem."**

**"They pleased"**: meaning they did this willingly without pressure. **"To make a certain contribution"**: referring to the company of the saints. Isn't it strange that the saints are poor? Indeed, often the world gets angry at those whom God is pleased with. Paul was going to carry these gifts and offerings to Jerusalem. But here he is not inviting them to give for the sake of Jerusalem, otherwise he would have gone to Rome first. Rather, the apostle intends to explain to the people of Rome the concept of the one body between Jews and Gentiles. So, the people of Macedonia and Achaia (two regions together in Greece) and the Greeks from the Gentiles, here they are participating with the people of Jerusalem who are originally Jews, in order for the people of Rome, both Gentiles and Jews, to learn to live together in love. They are now one body.

**Verse (27): "It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things."**

**"It pleased them"**: meaning they did so willingly and not out of obligation or at the suggestion of Paul. This is a favor from them. On the other hand, the people of Macedonia are indebted to the people of Jerusalem, who are originally Jews. From the Jews came Christ, the prophets, the

Holy Scriptures, the disciples, and the apostles. Grace descended to the whole world and to the Gentiles. Therefore, it became a duty for the Gentiles to participate in the material needs of Jerusalem, because they have received spiritual blessings from Jerusalem.

**Verse (28): "Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain."**

**"Have sealed"**: meaning:

1. I have completed and fulfilled this service for them.
2. The Apostle was going to seal a document in front of witnesses from the people of Jerusalem, stating that he had delivered this money to them, so that no one would doubt his integrity. And after that, he would have fulfilled his responsibility.

**"This fruit"** represents the gifts of the fruits of the faith of nations. It is one of the fruits of their righteousness through faith, the fruits of their love that they have received through the Holy Spirit. **Spain** shows that Paul is a torch of activity that wants to bring the message to the whole world.

**Verse (29): "But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."**

**"The blessing of the gospel"** refers to the sweet gifts of God to the believers, and it includes:

\* **Knowing the person of Christ** : The gospel is the word of God, and Christ is the word of God. When we hear the written word of God in the gospel and read it, we discover the person of Christ. We come to know Him, love Him, and His love fills our hearts, bringing us incredible joy. Those who love Christ will keep His commandments and walk in virtue. They will dwell with the Father and the Son (John 14:23).

\* **Open-mindedness**: To understand the words of the gospel, because what is written is written by the Spirit, and the meaning of what is written by the Spirit can only be revealed to a mind open to the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:45). When the deacon cries out during the reading of the gospel, "May its blessings be with all of us, Amen," it is a cry for the outpouring of the Spirit so that we may understand and comprehend the power of redemption, salvation, adoption, reconciliation, and the love of God. The gospel carries the message of salvation. Those who understand will have their faith strengthened, their hope intensified, and their determination strengthened to face the challenges of the world.

\* **The effectiveness of the Word**: The Bible is a mirror that reveals our flaws and sins, and the word of God is a double-edged sword through which we are born again (Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:23). This means that it has the power to break the hold of sin's love within our hearts, so that we become like those who are born again with a new nature. This is why it is important to regularly read the Bible. The word carries the power of the Spirit and life (John 6:63). It interacts with the individual and moves their conscience to expose their flaws. Self-judgment begins, and the Holy Spirit starts to convict. The person goes to confess, and the word gains authority over the soul, ruling with its power and holiness. The mind is transformed and renewed, and the person's appearance changes to reflect the image of Christ, aligning with the life they are called to. Notice the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of

Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." This power has transformed the people of Corinth within a few months from paganism and immorality to a people with gifts.

Paul confirms to the people of Rome that when he comes to them, they will all receive the **fullness of the blessing** of the gospel, and everyone will grow in faith and virtue. This aligns with what he said in Romans 1:11, "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established."

**Verse (30): "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me"**

**The love of the Spirit** refers to the love that the Holy Spirit has produced in your hearts.

**Striving together in prayers** means engaging in mutual prayers, which is a sign of love. Love is evidence of the Spirit's work, which is why we believe in intercession; they pray for us, and we pray for them. Note that the Apostle Paul also prays for them (Romans 1:9-10 & 15:33). Here, he is requesting their prayers.

**"Through our Lord Jesus Christ"** means that I am requesting from you in the name of Christ. In Hebrew thought, the name signifies the qualities and abilities of a person. The intended meaning is:

1. Their prayers will be powerful and answered because their strength is derived from the redemptive work of Christ. For the Lord Jesus says, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). He also says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). In Christ, we are accepted, and our prayers are accepted.
2. Their prayers will also have power because they originate from hearts filled with love, specifically the love of the Spirit. This is something that brings joy to God and He responds to it. And note that the Apostle considers prayer to be a spiritual struggle, as he says, **"that you strive together"**. And praying for one another is what is known as intercessory mediation.

**Verse (31): "that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints"**

**"That I may be delivered"** means that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him what would happen to him in Jerusalem. This visit to Jerusalem was his last visit, where he would be arrested. He was well aware of the risks involved. Therefore, he requested prayer on his behalf. **"That my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable"** indicates that the apostle was afraid of not being accepted by the Christian saints in Jerusalem, who were originally Jews, due to his liberation from the law.

**Verse (32): "that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you."**

He will go to them in Rome with joy if they accept his service in Jerusalem.



**Verse (33): "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."**

Just as he requested them to pray for him, he is now praying for them to have peace among themselves. Similarly, the priest prays saying "Peace be with you" (Eirene pasi) and the people respond, "And with your spirit" (Ke eto pnevmati sou).

# Chapter Sixteen

This chapter contains many names to whom the Apostle sends greetings, or from whom he sends greetings to the people of Rome. This chapter appears as a bearer of icons, all saints whom the Apostle has bestowed sweet titles (beloved/relatives/workers with us in the Lord/the one who labors in the Lord). Each person has a title engraved in the heart of the Apostle (note the importance of encouraging people and praising them in attracting them to the Church). This image can be compared to the honor board in schools where the pictures and names of outstanding students are placed. These saints, with their grace-filled lives, proved that what the Apostle Paul taught in the letter is not just theoretical information, but a life that every human being can live, evidenced by the fact that these saints lived it. This is to encourage people in all generations that Christianity is a lived faith, not theories. Rather, the grace he told us about transforms humans into saints.

This chapter is a vivid, joyful, and effective portrayal of Christian life in the apostolic age. In previous chapters, Paul was shown as a man of power in knowledge and faith, and here he appears as a man of power in love, as these greetings show his love for all. Often we feel that the Apostle will conclude his letter by saying 'Amen' (33:15 & 16:20&24) but he returns to continue his conversation as if, out of love, he doesn't want to conclude his conversation with them.

**Verses (1-15): "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also."**

**"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. Greet Mary, who labored much for us. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them."**

**"Phoebe"**: she carried the letter to the Romans from Corinth, so Paul introduces her to them to receive her well. **"Receive her in the Lord"**: as if she is coming in the name of Christ who is in

them, and she is in Him as well. He commends them to Phoebe even though he did not serve them directly, but this is indicative of the bonds of love he feels. With his great love for them, he felt he was not a stranger to them but rather a connection with them. As he gives them his love, he asks for their love. He is confident that as he loves them, they also love him. Phoebe may have been of pagan origin as Phoebe is the name of a pagan goddess. It seems that Phoebe was wealthy and had a prestigious social status. Her business interests may have required her presence in Rome, she was traveling for trade, and on this trip, she carried the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. She was appointed as a deaconess for the church in Cenchreae (a port 9 miles east of Corinth). She had her active service in the church. The apostle called her his sister, and she is his sister in Christ. He commends the Christians of Rome to her in her foreignness. Her service was distribution, hospitality, and the service of the sick and strangers. Perhaps the believers gathered in her house in Cenchreae due to persecution in Corinth (Acts 18:12). As the people of Philippi gathered outside the city by a river (Acts 16:13). Here we see Paul acknowledging her good deeds. Acknowledging a good deed is the least thing to repay a good deed. **"in a manner worthy of the saints"**: that she receives the rights of the saints. **Priscilla and Aquila** = (Acts 18:2&18&26 & 1 Corinthians 19:16 + 2 Timothy 19:4). They were Jewish tent makers, of the same profession as Paul so they stayed together. They left Rome by order of Claudius Caesar in 49 AD, who expelled all Jews from Rome but they returned again. They were wealthy and pious merchants. It seems that the wife was more zealous, so the apostle mentioned her first. The apostle met them for the first time in Corinth and stayed with them for 18 months, and went with them to Ephesus, then they returned to Rome. Wherever they were found, they opened their house as a church for worship and service to strangers (can each of our homes be a church, a house of prayer, and praise). They risked their lives for Paul, note the persecution and revolutions against Paul in Corinth (Acts 6:18-12 +19: 31, 32) and they hid the apostle (Acts 18:3). Therefore, he gives them thanks. They are the ones who preached to Apollos.

**Epaenetus** = a Greek word meaning worthy of praise, the first to accept faith in Asia Minor at the hands of the apostle. He may be from the house of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 16:15) and he is called beloved, which is a call to return love with love, so he serves the church tirelessly. **Mary** = It seems that her service was hospitality in her house. Although a woman may not serve the word's service, she is able to attract many. **Andronicus and Junia** = They are Jews who may be related to the apostle, or he said they are his relatives because they are Jews like him. They endured prison with him at an unknown time. He takes pride in them because they knew Christ before him. They had their important role in service until they became famous among the apostles because of their service. The word apostles means that they were famous apostles among the apostles, so there were many apostles preaching the gospel and they are not the twelve apostles. It was said that they were among the seventy apostles. **Rufus** = It is said that he is the son of Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross with Christ (Mark 15:21). He testified to Rufus's mother that in her love for the apostle and her service to him, she became like a mother to him. **Rufus** is mentioned as a well-known figure in Rome.

**Verse (16): "Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you."**

"Greet" = "Aspazesthe" which means to greet with a kiss. The church took the teaching of the Apostle Paul in its liturgies. It is a declaration of a state of partnership in the spirit that necessitates complete forgiveness. It is a covenant of peace in the presence of God. After the apostle listed some names, we find him declaring the love of the whole church for each other. The church everywhere feels that it is one body. The kiss in the church is definitely between men and men and between women and women (1 Corinthians 16:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, 1 Peter 5:14). The holy kiss is not a lustful kiss nor a treacherous kiss like Judas's kiss.

Notes:

1. Paul likely knew these individuals when they were expelled from Rome by Claudius Caesar, as they went to Greece but later returned to Rome.
2. We do not find the name Peter among these names, which questions his presence in Rome. Although Paul acknowledges that he is one of the pillars (Galatians 2:9), why doesn't he mention his name?!

**Verses (17-20): "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."**

In verse (16) he says greet one another... What prevents this unity and love except those who cause **divisions and offenses**? The church must filter out such people because they advocate strange heresies, i.e., teachings contrary to what they received from the apostles, including the Judaizers. These are corporeal people who serve their bellies, not Christ. Division is the weapon of Satan. But if the body is united together, Satan cannot enter. Divisions come from people's concern and servitude to their bellies, i.e., to their selves and desires, and to other passions (Philippians 3:19). **Division** = separation or disagreement. These people with nice words and good sayings (these are the opposite of the holy kiss) and their honeyed words (which are the opposite of what is inside them) deceive **the simple** = i.e., the simple-minded, pure-hearted, non-scholars, and those without knowledge. It's no wonder that Satan changes his image to the image of an angel (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Therefore, it is appropriate for us to be **wise in what is good** = those who choose to do good will live in peace on earth and in glory in heaven, so whoever chooses good is wise. And it is understood that a person should use his wisdom to do good. The wise person can distinguish spirits and expose the causes of divisions, so the Lord Christ asked us to be wise as serpents (Matthew 10:16) and there is a wisdom for evil, those who with their intelligence plot against others and this is what is called cunning.

**"Simple concerning evil"**: The **"simple"** person is the one who has a single vision and a single goal. And the meaning of being simple for evil is that their sole goal is to glorify God and to have people see their good works and glorify God. They turn away from evil and hate it, desiring nothing but the glory of God. The simple for evil is pure, without inclination towards evil, and

does not know how to act against the truth. And whoever seeks good and distances themselves from evil, God will open their eyes to discover the truth. And for the one who is simple for evil, Jesus called them full of light, for Christ the light will dwell in them. "**The God of peace**" means that God has become at peace with us, speaking peace to us, and making peace for us. "**Will crush Satan**": in verse 20 is a prayer from the apostle on their behalf, asking God to grant them divine grace for their deliverance from all trials. He prays to the God of peace to fill them with hope for deliverance from these evils and divisions. The apostle does not pray for God to crush those who cause divisions, but for God to crush the devil who is working in them. God is the one who crushes the devil, not by the hand of man. This is symbolically portrayed in the victory of Joshua and his feet being placed on the kings of Canaan. But who has authority over Satan? [1] **The wise in good** [2] **The simple for evil** [3] **Those who are obedient to God** = "**Your obedience has become known**," and these conditions were mentioned by the apostle earlier. "**Shortly**": God has his specified time in which he intervenes with his wisdom, which we do not know. In it, he removes all those who cause divisions and saves his church. Here the victory is temporary, but in heaven, the victory is final. Here it seems as if Christ is sleeping, and the boat (the church) is battling the waves (the wars against the church). But with one word, everything will quickly calm down when he wants it to. "**The grace of our Lord Jesus**": The grace of our Lord preserves the Church from divisions.

**Verses (21-24): "Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."**

Here Paul sends greetings from those with him to the people of Rome. From **Timothy**, the beloved child of the Apostle, his child in faith. His partner in work and companion in many journeys. And from **Gaius** = the host of the Apostle and the entire church. Perhaps because he turned his house into a worship center, he used to host believers who were strangers to Corinth. **Lucius** = Maybe he is Lucius of Cyrene, who was a leader and well-known in the church of Antioch (Acts 13:1). **Jason** = He was known in the church of Thessaloniki where he suffered for his association with Paul (Acts 17:5-6). **Sosipater** of Berea (Acts 20:4) and he calls them his **relatives** = They may actually be his relatives or he says this because they are originally Jews. **Verse (22): Tertius** = Tertius was working as a scribe for Paul because Paul's handwriting was so poor it could not be read easily due to his weak eyesight, so he apologizes for this to the Galatians (Galatians 6:11). Out of his love, after seeing Paul's love for the Romans, Tertius asked Paul's permission to write his name so he could also send his greetings to the Romans.

**Erastus** = He was the treasurer of the city, so he was a great man who held a major position or was a trustee of money, and his dignity did not prevent him from serving Paul and the church, and his name was associated with Timothy (Acts 19:22 & 2 Timothy 4:20). The value of Erastus was not diminished by being a preacher of the gospel of Christ.

**Verses (25-27): "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began. but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith; to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."**

**The concluding doxology.**

"**Now to Him who is able**" = "**now**" indicates that it is the end and conclusion it comes as "and now" in Greek, meaning as we conclude the letter, I leave you to God who is able to establish you.

"**My gospel**": My glad tidings that I have declared in this letter.

And **verse (27)** comes as a completion to it and the meaning is.

"**Now to Him who is able to establish you... to God, alone wise... to Him be the glory forever. Amen.**" This doxology (praise) carries the echo of what has been said in the entire letter. It expresses the need for God who not only gives faith but also gives us steadfastness in it. And the "**mystery**" is the acceptance of the nations for "**obedience to faith**" which is the same phrase with which the letter began (Romans 1:5). So, Paul's Gospel is summed up in calling the nations to obedience to faith. And we find here.

[1] God is the one who establishes us in faith. [2] God's plan for us (His mystery) is eternal.

[3] The plan was previously prophesied by the prophets in the Old Testament. [4] God's plan is for all nations to obey the faith.

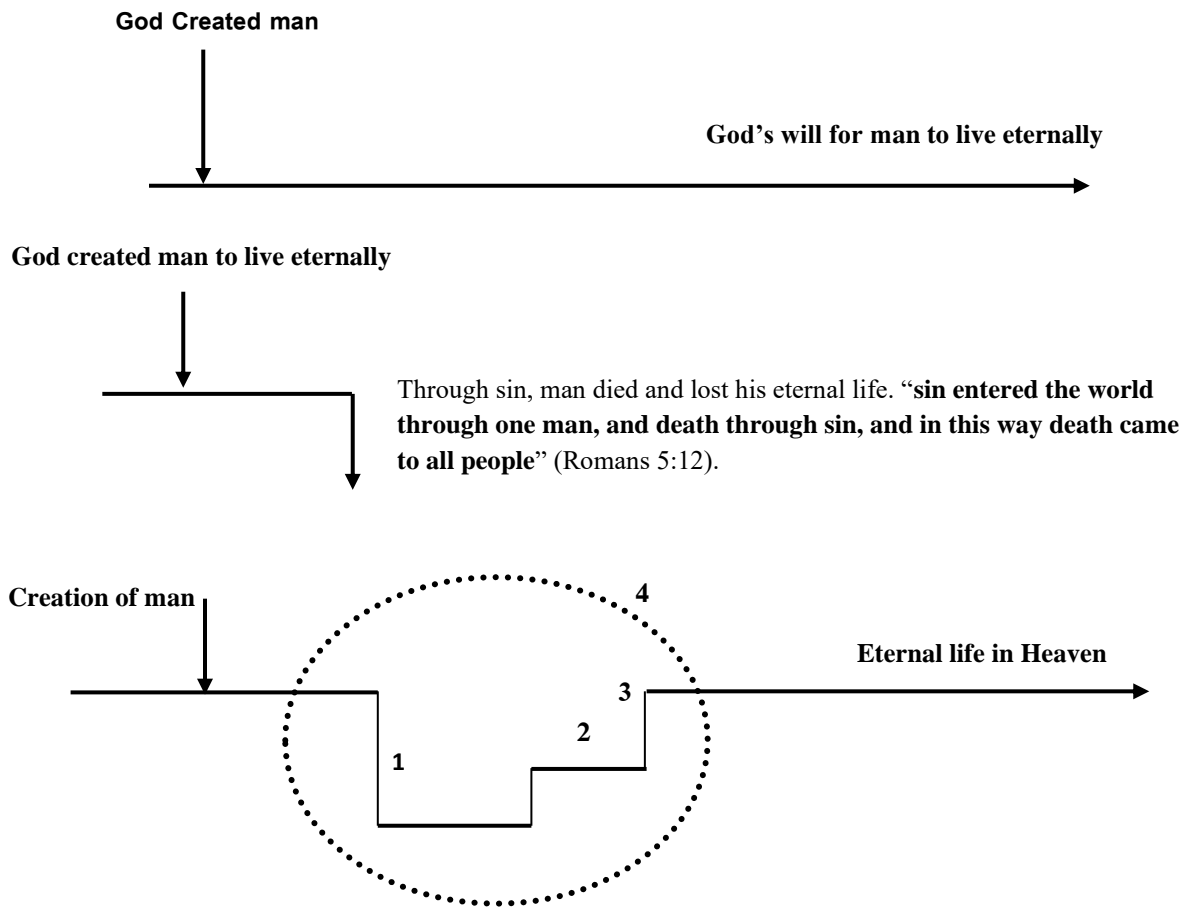
The last verse is understood when it is divided into two parts.

1. **I wrote to the Romans from Corinth** (this is a separate part from the rest).

2. **Through Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae** (i.e., the one who carried it to Rome).

Because the writer of the letter is Tertius (verse 22).

# Appendix: The Apostle Paul's Perspective on Salvation in Christianity



## **Introduction:**

1. Fall and death
2. The first resurrection from the death of sin was through salvation (Revelations 20:5 + John 5: 25).
3. The second advent of Christ, and through Him, we start the second resurrection where we live in glory
4. The period of life on earth between the fall and the second advent. Isaiah said it would be a brief moment; this means that it is a very short period compared to eternal life. However, God uses this period to discipline man, so that his will would be the same as that of God so that he can be redeemed and live forever.

## **God created man to live forever:**

1. The first verse in the Bible is “In the beginning, God created .....” (Genesis 1:1). This is not a coincidence. The revelation wants us to understand God’s graciousness, goodness and love, who wants to create life since He does not create death. God does not create man to die, but to live an eternal life enjoying the glory of God.
2. God created the world in six days. The day was not 24 hours as it is now, but the day was estimated to be of hundreds, or even thousands of millions of years. This was before the creation of Adam. This was for the beloved Adam to find the land much more like Paradise. It is not reasonable that God continued to create the world for thousands of millions of years, and then create Adam only to live just a few years and then he dies. Man’s lifespan does not exceed 120 years now. Therefore, logic implies that God created the world in thousands of millions of years, and then He created Adam to live forever.
3. God commanded Adam to eat from all trees in the garden (Genesis 2:16). Among the trees of the Paradise, there was the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). So it was available to Adam to eat from this tree and live forever according to God’s will.
4. After the flood, God gave Noah the rainbow as a sign to prove His will for man to live, and that God will not destroy the world once again (Genesis 9:8-17). However, we find that the rainbow sign exists around the divine throne like an emerald (Revelation 4:3). If we understood that emerald with its green color that refers to life, the rainbow sign around the divine throne refers to life, and that God’s will is for man to live forever and that God took life of man once, and he will not take his life again after man is risen the second resurrection.
5. When man died, the divine solution was the redemption so that man would live forever for this is God’s will that must and will be implemented.

## **Fall and death:**



God created man free, and it is through this freedom that man fell in sin because Adam chose to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, although God prohibited him from eating from it (Genesis 2:17). Adam ate from that tree instead of eating from the tree of life. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil meant tasting evil, and because of the weakness of his body, Adam loved evil, so he was separated from God and God is life. Separation from God means death and so Adam died as God had warned him before, not because God wanted Adam to die, but because Adam freely chose the path of death, as we say in the Gregorian Liturgy “I have plucked for myself the sentence of death”. This was because Adam was created free, and with his freedom, he had a will other than God’s (Matthew 23:37). Through this, Adam was no longer able to live an eternal life, but he lost his power to do good. That was because he was separated from God, the Holy and the Righteous. That is how the human kind became corrupted (Romans 3:12).

Sin resulted in curse. “Cursed is the ground because of you” (Genesis 3:17). This was for Adam, but Cain had much severe punishment “Now you are cursed from the earth” (Genesis 4:11). Therefore, we heard that the last words of the Old Testament was “curse” (Malachi 4:6). The meaning is that God created life and joy (The meaning of Eden, the Paradise of joy) and because of man’s sins, curse entered into existence.

The Apostle Paul says, “for all have sinned....” (Romans 3:23-24). His word “all” meant no exceptions, as all the children of Adam now have a sinful nature. In the beginning, the human nature was created without flaw or sin, as God created Adam without corruption. God created Adam in His image without blemish, and with the will and the freedom to live a holy Life in Paradise, but through his sins, his nature became sick and corrupted, and thus, our nature became also sick, sinful and corrupted because it stems from the nature of the first sinful body. Man became unable to fulfill the law of God, or to follow the path of righteousness, so man needed a doctor to heal his nature.

Christ explained what happened to man in the story of the Good Samaritan. Fallen man became much like a man attacked by robbers (demons) on the road, left half-dead (Luke 10:30), powerless, wounded, unable to climb the heights of righteousness as before. Until Christ Who is the healing doctor came, the Good Samaritan, and put it him in a hotel (the Church) to receive treatment, completing the righteousness with the help of the healing grace that healed his nature. Thus, he has become able to do righteousness by his new recovered nature.

Prophet David says that “Have mercy on me, Lord heal me, for I have sinned against you” (Psalms 41:4). Man’s soul is weakened, spoiled and wounded by sin and it became in a need of God, who said: “I am the Lord, who heals you”. (Exodus 15:26). Christ came as a doctor to heal us saying, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9: 12-13).

Death and curse entered because of sin, but God did not stand helpless, therefore, there was redemption. Christ came to die, then rise and give us His life to live eternally, and thus God’s eternal plan for man to live eternally is completed. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, so that we may receive the blessing rather than the curse (Galatians 3: 13-14).

Therefore, we also heard the promise “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life”; that tree from which Adam failed to eat, so he died (Revelation 2:7). This means that all those who follow Christ, and abandon all the evils of this world, God will give them to eat from the tree of life, and then he would live forever. That is why we find that the last verse of the Bible says, “Amen, Come Lord Jesus” (Revelations 22:20). Through his second coming, our eternal life in Heaven begins and the will of God is carried out. We note that the redemption gave us eternal life on two stages:-

**The first** is what is called the first resurrection, where we live on the earth where we rise from the death of sin (John 5:25), but we live in the hardships of this world. That what God uses to discipline His children in order to have a part in the second resurrection.

**The second** comes after the second advent of Christ for judgment where the general resurrection after which we enter Heaven in glory and live forever.

We note that the period since the fall of man until the second coming of Christ where He comes for judgment; i.e. the period during which we live on earth in suffering does not exceed few thousand years. Those thousands of years are nothing compared with the infinite eternity. As if God's plan for man to live forever is only disrupted for a very short period of time. This is what the Prophet Isaiah expressed in his saying, “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back” (Isaiah 54:7).

“With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, Says the Lord, your Redeemer” (Isaiah 54:8).

This moment mentioned in the book of Isaiah is the period of pain, physical distress and death suffered by man since the fall of Adam and until the first advent of Christ which by which the tender mercies of God began, and will be completed with the second coming of Christ.

### **The curse and blessing:**

Because of Adam's sin, Adam heard God's words, “Cursed is the ground for your sake” (Genesis 3: 17-19). So, what is the curse of the ground? We are not fully aware of the magnitude of this curse, because we had not seen the earth in its beautiful nature before it was cursed. But, we may imagine that God as the beneficent one, would only create a paradise full of joy, as the word “Eden” means happiness and joy. So all pains we see now are the effects of the curse ... such as diseases, epidemics, earthquakes, volcanoes, dreadful floods, extreme heat and cold climates that destroy crops, agricultural pests such as insects, desertification and drought. Before all of this, we see the brutal corruption of humankind when Cain killed his brother Abel. Then we witnessed that this brutal nature of man because of his sin reflected on animals that gained brutal nature too. Maybe it is because of this brutal nature of man, God allowed him to eat meat (Genesis 9:3) after God only provided him with the fruits of the earth to eat from (Genesis 1:29). Fruits were also the food of animals (Genesis 1:30). From this, we see that the effects of the corruption of human nature extended to all inanimate objects and even animals. Some may explain these effects in a scientific way such as earthquakes and the insects attacking crops, but if we reviewed the Book of Prophet

Haggai, we would know that all of these are punishment tools in the hands of God to use against us when we commit sins.

So The Apostle Paul says “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin” (Romans 5:12). This may mean that what we witness and experience from the effects of sin is death. However, the effects of sin is far beyond this, as there are effects we can realize, and there are also effects we cannot realize.

The Apostle Paul explained this in another way when he said, “For the creation was subjected to futility” (Romans 8:20). We see in (Romans 8:20-22) that when the glory is revealed in God's children, creation shall be renewed and be freed from the bondage of corruption that was a reflection of man's corruption because of his sins.

As the effects of the curse extended because of man's sins, the effects of the blessing of the cross also extended. The blessing brought by Christ after He redeemed us from the curse of the law. He became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). The believers were granted sonship, eternal inheritance, and blessings in their lives on earth ... etc.

But we saw the blessing of saints extends to bless the land and change the nature of monsters:

- 1) The brutal nature of Saul of Tarsus changed and he became The Apostle Paul.
- 2) The people of Rome who felt joyful by the devouring of people by monsters, turned into the Church of Rome.
- 3) It was said that because of Anba Paul, God caused the waters of the Nile to overflow.
- 4) The snake in the cave of Saint Barsoum the Naked turned into a pet losing its brutal nature.

Grace radiated from the Saints and its effects extended to the surroundings, as the effects of the curse and the sin extended to destroy the surroundings.

After Christ, both the path of sin, curse and death, and the path of goodness, life and faith were set available for every man to walk. (Deuteronomy 30: 19-20).

### **He became a curse for us**

It is much like “And the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14), meaning that the Divinity became flesh, however, it does not mean that the Divinity turns into flesh, but it means that what has become apparent to us, is the flesh. When it is said that Christ became curse for us, it means that He is the righteous, the Holy one without sin, became apparently cursed before us as He is crucified. The scripture says, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on wood” (Galatians 3:13) + (Deuteronomy 21:23). Carrying on His head a crown of thorns and the thorns are from the effects of the sin and its curse (Genesis 3:18). Christ was naked on the cross, and nakedness is one of the effects of the sin (Genesis 3:7). So when The Apostle Paul said, “Therefore, as by one man sin entered the world....” (Romans 5:12), he humbly expresses that he does not fully understand all the effects of the sin and its impact on earth and creation, and all the corruption that took place. The universe includes forces and facts that we only know little about and perhaps one of these facts are the effect of individual on others and on the environment, whether this was because of man's sin or his holiness.

As we have seen, the effects of holiness transfer to others, and we know that the intercessions of the saints are very clear to everyone and the impacts of the prayers of some people extend to others. The corruption of mankind was reformed by the Incarnation of Christ, Whose body gave the humans the power of victory over the evil inside them and in the world around them. Christ created a new nature in man much like the fully pure eternal life. Those who refuse His acts, anxiety and evil will be with them. “The Lord told the wicked, there is no peace” (Isaiah 48:22).

### **What did Christ offer to us?**

#### **1. Redemption:**

It means to pay the price or to be swapped with us. This happened on the cross. The word itself refers to the sacrificial payment for someone, but here it means that Lord Jesus dies for humanity. Because eternal death got into human nature through sin which mingled with it. The body, which the Lord took, was complete, with a spirit and a body and was united with the unlimited Divinity, and that is how God became incarnate, which means he gained all the human attributes. It is unlimited because Divinity united with humanity, so when this man died, he was able to be to be a substitute for all humanity through his unlimited nature.

So Man's sin was unlimited, because it was against God and God is unlimited, so no man or angel could redeem Adam and his descendants, because all the descendants of Adam sinned, moreover, they were born sinners, and the angels are also limited. God is only unlimited and without sin, and it was only possible for a man to redeem a man like him, hence, the concept of the incarnation.

The following prophecies talked about this redemption:

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death” (Hosea 13:14).

“None of them can by any means redeem his brother...But God will redeem my soul” (Psalms 49:7, 15).

“For the Lord had redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel...Thus said the Lord, the Redeemer” (Isaiah 44:6, 23, 24).

#### **2. Atonement:**

Man was naked and exposed because of his sin. God covered Adam with shirts of leather. Adam took the leather from a sacrificed animal, and then God took this leather and covered Adam with it. Through this, God gave the idea of the coming Christ to sacrifice himself on the cross to veil and cover us. The meaning of Atonement is covering.

Christ covers us by uniting with Him and covering in Him; here we see the redeemer has united with the redeemed. If man abides in Christ and Christ covers him, the Father no longer sees his weakness and sins, but sees Christ that covered him, therefore he is saved. Therefore, Christ tells us, “Abide in Me, and I in you” (John 15:4), and this is the way of salvation. God clearly explained

the idea of atonement in the rituals of atonement day, where the blood of the sacrifice is sprinkled on the Cover of the Ark of the Covenant that is called the mercy seat, then God atones all the sins of his people for their purification (Leviticus 16:30).

### **3. Justification:**

Redemption = Christ dies for us

Atonement = Christ covers our sins by uniting us in Him = We are reconciled with God with the death of His son.

Justification = Christ gives us his life to live righteously and to gain the righteousness of Christ after covering us, and so, we put on His dress of righteousness as our nature is renewed, and we are now able to easily follow the path of righteousness with His life that He gave to us.

Thus, Christ has reformed humanity that was corrupted by sin since the law failed to justify the Jews and the conscience failed to justify the Gentiles.

Christ triumphed over death and rose with a victorious life. Christ gave us this life to triumph over sins and to live to righteously. This is the meaning of being saved by His life (Romans 5:10).

Isaiah predicted this justification, “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” (Isaiah 45:25). “I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry” (Isaiah 46:13). “But My salvation shall be forever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished” (Isaiah 51:6). By saying My righteousness here He means the righteousness of God, not human righteousness.

We were reconciled with God by the death of His Son (Romans 5:10), through the redemption and atonement; the unity of the redeemer with us, then we live righteously and our nature is now reformed as Christ gave us His life that He rose from the death with, so we “shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10).

### **The Bible revolves around one axis:**

Reformation of mankind which was corrupted by sin. Let us take a quick look at the story of the Bible:-

**1. Moses' Books:-** We see that God created man to live forever, then man sins, and then he dies, and then God sends a redeemer (a symbol of Christ) who saves people from servitude by means of the Passover Lamb (the cross), and they cross the sea (baptism), eat the manna (Eucharist), and drink a spiritual drink (the descent of the Holy Spirit).

The Apostle Paul in (1 Corinthians 10:1-6 + 1 Corinthians 5:7-8) explained all this. Then comes the disorientation of people in wilderness, which is the story of our life on earth that ends with our entrance into the Heavenly Canaan after crossing the Jordan River (death).

**2. Historical Books:-** We see the corruption of people, when there was no king ruling the land (Judges 19:1 and 21:25). Then the Kingdom is built as a symbol of the kingdom that Christ built.

**3. Poetic scriptures:-** Where we can see the believer's relations with God and with the world. In the Proverbs, we see how to act wisely. In the Ecclesiastes, we see the vanity of the world. In the Song of Songs, we can see the love between God and the believer's soul. In Job, we see God disciplining the soul. However, we should live in a spirit of prayer (Psalms).

**4. Prophetic Scriptures:-** It can be summarized in explaining the corruption of people as a symbol of the corruption of mankind. However, there is always a hope that a redeemer will come.

**5. Then the new testament comes:-** We see Jesus the Savior and the redeemer Who was incarnate, died and rose again to give us His life, and whoever hears His voice will have life or what is called the first resurrection (John 5: 25). Jesus is the One Who will come again to judge the world and by His second advent, the eternal life begins in glory, this life that is hoped for by every believer, and by which God's will for man to live eternally will come true. That is why John cried out at his revelation "Amen. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus" when he heard Christ saying, "Surely I come quickly" (Revelation 20: 22).

### **Righteousness and healing of the old nature:**

"You shall call his name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Thus, we see that we can only get rid of lameness, rickets and festering wounds to full recovery and normal walking by receiving help and care from the Heavenly Doctor. Since the doctor not only heals the wounds, but also provides the patient with essential elements for the health of his body, and the required nutrition to be healthy. God's righteous care provides all who live in the body with all the elements and means used by the doctor during the healing process. God can heal us not only by erasing the sins we committed, but with more than that to help us avoid falling into sins once again.

The fact that man is unable to abide by the law is clear in the words of The Apostle Paul, "For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21). Nevertheless, Christ died to grant me death of my old nature, and He rose so that I can rise with Him with a new nature. This is what happens in baptism. After the Holy Spirit descends on the baptized man in Chrismation, He grants the believer the constancy in this new life, the life of Christ, and he will have the life of Christ and the strength to walk through the path of righteousness. He will be granted strength and a strong will to follow the path of righteousness as man's will alone is not sufficient to avoid falling into sins, however, this will requires divine support and help, that's why The Apostle Paul says, "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The work of the Holy Spirit that is based on the redemption of Christ is called grace, but grace does not eliminate the freedom of Man's will. Therefore, each believer should-

- 1) Strive and control his desires, tongue, and thoughts.
- 2) Continuously ask for God's help in his prayers.

Truly, God is the Healer of our nature, but we have to do our best as possible as we can since The Apostle Paul says, "We then, as workers together with Him" (2 Corinthians 6:1). We note that grace does not cancel the freedom of man, but it is for those who request and use it willingly and

humbly, not for those who are proud of their strength and ability, but proud of God who shows mercy.

So the righteousness of God is not in the commandments of the law, which strikes fear as a guardian (Galatians 3:24), before which man stands helpless and unable to fulfill (Acts 15:10). The righteousness of God is in the new nature that God grants to His children. This new nature finds the help from the grace of Christ by which man can complete the commandments of the law. This is the grace that makes us the sons of God. "But as many as received Him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). This was not of man by nature, and can never be achieved unless he took dominion by grace after being in Christ, and by this grace, he will have a new nature. What distinguishes this new nature is love, love that is poured in us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5: 5). If love is found, it will be for God, and every human being, even our enemies, and it will be a sign of having the new nature. Because love cannot be achieved by our old nature or by our human ability, however, it is a gift from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes our nature, helps our weaknesses, improves our abilities and heals our sick nature that we got from Adam. "In sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5). He is the factor in the sacraments that makes me be in Christ, and He will rebuke me when I am wrong (John 16:8). In short, He makes me abide in Christ, so I have Christ's life, therefore I am saved. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the grace of graces. The Holy Spirit is God's grace found in Jesus Christ. He gives us the strength to live this new life, the life of Christ. He also helps our infirmities (Romans 8:26).

### **In Christ:**

It is an expression that is used a lot by The Apostle Paul. It is consistent with the words of Christ, "Abide in me, and I in you ... He that abides in me and I in Him, ..... brings forth much fruit" (John 15: 4-5). The Apostle Paul means by using this expression that through baptism, we became members in The body of Christ. All of us are in one body, the body of Christ, and Christ is the head. "He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18).

Because we are all with one Spirit baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13), (Which means: We are now in the body of Christ and became in Him through baptism), and we all drank into one Spirit (this is about the Holy Spirit in Chrismation). His words "to drink" is consistent with Words of Christ, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit" (John 7: 37-39). Every believer then becomes a part of the body of Christ, and all members integrate to form the Body of Christ. Each body has its own members like hands, legs and a nose and each one with an integral function ) also the body of Christ has its own members and each part has a function that complements the other functions (Ephesians 2:10 + 1 Corinthians 12:4-30 + Ephesians 4:11-12). Therefore the church is an integrated entity and Christ is the head.

"For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (Ephesians 5:30).

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Then who is in Christ is a saint. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2 + Philippians 1:1). In Christ, we

have all graces “The grace of God which is given you by Christ; that in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge” (1 Corinthians 1:4-5). As long as we are in Christ, our members become his members. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!” (1 Corinthians 6:15). So the fornicator sins against the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:18). Following the same concept, The Apostle Paul says, “But we have the thought of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). Whoever is in Christ has the new nature. “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Note the repetition of the idea in (Ephesians 1:1-14). “The faithful in Christ Jesus... who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ ... Even as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world ... In whom we have redemption through His blood ... In Christ also we have obtained an inheritance ... In whom also after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”.

In (Ephesians 2:10), “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”. In (Ephesians 2:21-22), “In whom all the building, fitly framed together, grows unto a Holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit”.

Note these verses, “Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 16:19). “My love be with you all in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 16:24) + “We speak before God in Christ” (2 Corinthians 12:19). The Apostle Paul sees that the relationship between the members are through their abiding in Christ, even salutation, love and words. Because if we are not abiding in Christ, our salutation, love and words will be devoid of love and he would be a cheater. Following the same concept, The Apostle Paul says, “For God is my record how greatly I long for you all in the compassion of Christ” (Philippians 1:8). We hear that there is no rejoice except in Christ” Rejoice in the Lord” (Philippians 4:4).

We also hear his words to Corinthians that they are “the children in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1). The believer who was born in baptism is in Christ and starts as a child in Christ and then he grows and grows. This is not surprising, Christ himself grew in stature, wisdom and grace and grew up with them. (Luke 2: 40,52). Review verses: 2 Thessalonians 1:3 + 2 Corinthians 10:15 + Ephesians 4:15 + 1 Thessalonians 4:10.

But abiding in Christ has some conditions, we can see one of them in (Galatians 6:15, 5:6) “For in Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works by love”. From the above we see that The Apostle Paul believes that by baptism, we become abiding members in Christ, each part has its role and gift. The members of each one of us are the members of Christ; we are members of His body of flesh and bones, even that who abides in Christ has His mind. The Relations between the members cannot not be true, unless we are in Christ, even greetings and solicitudes. Believers are saints as long as they are in Christ. And certainly, by abiding in Christ, the son of God, we become sons of God too. If we unite with Christ, the Holy Spirit will be upon us.

Who is in Christ, turns into the form of Christ, “My little children, over whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19) + “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27) + “But put on the Lord Christ, and make not



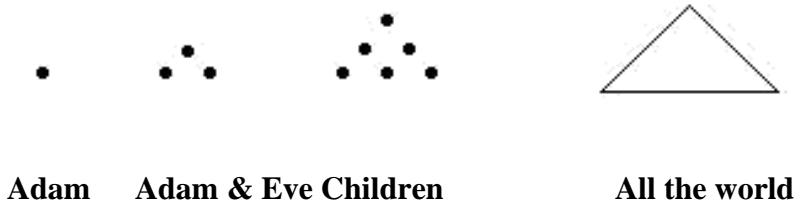
provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14) + “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Colossians 3:10). Anyone has the form of Christ here on the Earth, will have the form of Christ in his glory in Heaven (1 John 2:3). Whoever unites with Christ, the son of God, will be the son of God as well, and will be in the image of Christ. This gift is the gift of the filiation of God given by the Holy Spirit as He is the spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:4-7). He is the spirit of adoption as He make us abide in Christ the son (2 Corinthians 1:21), “But now He who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God”, and “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). When the spirit witness that we are the children of God, we cry and say to the Father, “Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). Sons shall inherit glory with the Son of God who became heir of everything for us (Romans 8:17 + Galatians 4:7 + Hebrews 1:2).

**What “Abide in me” means and what “and I in you” means:**

**1. Abide in me = we in Christ.**

God created Adam and took a rib from him to form Eve, so Eve became a part of Adam, and the children are part of Adam and part of Eve, so the children are part of Adam.

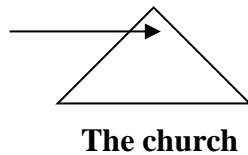
**Adam, The head of creation Adam**



Thus, Adam is the head of creation; all of us are part of Adam. As long as the root has died, then the members shall die too, and Adam is now the head of a dead body.

**Christ is the head of the church**

**All of us become in Christ**



Christ came to be the head of a living body and each of us belongs to the body of Christ by baptism. Thus, Christ is the head of the church and every baptized believer becomes in Christ. Everyone who is inside the triangle (body of Christ) becomes in Christ, and who is in Christ becomes a part

of the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul imagined that each one of us is a part of that body, someone is a leg, the other is a hand, or an eye and so on (review 1 Corinthians 12) and all of us integrate to form one body. Each one of us has work to do; this work integrates with the work of others. Even if the members of that body died, they will rise again and they will enjoy the eternal life because Christ gave them his life, and this the meaning of “I in you”.

## **2. And I in you= Christ is in us**

Christ died and rose to grant us His life. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

“Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10).

“But alive unto God through Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11).

We became a living seed. Even if we are buried in the earth, due to the life inside it, a living tree will be planted (1 Corinthians 15:35-38).

If Christ lives in us, He is using our members as tools for righteousness (Romans 6:13).

### **For that reason, The Apostle Paul says:**

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!” (1 Corinthians 6:15).

The life we take is the life of the resurrected Christ from the dead, The Apostle Paul says:

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5).

Therefore, the life we take is an eternal one as The Apostle Paul explains:

“For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him.” (Romans 6:9).

We take this life right after baptism (Romans 6:4).

If it is this way, why would we deprive children from it if it would grant them eternal life?

### **How do we be in Christ:**

This happens through baptism ... “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### **What is baptism?**

- ❖ “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we also may live a new life, and if we are united with Him in the likeness of His death, so, we will be in His resurrection too. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the flesh ruled by sin might be done away with that we

should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. If we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him” (Romans 6:3 -8).

- ❖ “Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through your faith in the work of God, Who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all your sins” (Colossians 2:12, 13).
- ❖ “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Christ and by the Spirit of our God”. (1 Corinthians 6:11).
- ❖ “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6).
- ❖ From the above, we understand that Christ died on the cross to carry our sins, but the question is who benefits from the cross? One of the conditions is baptism. Whoever is baptized dies with Christ, and whoever dies, will not be accounted for any sin. This goes even in the civil law, whoever dies in trial, the trial will be over and the case will be dropped. Who dies in baptism will be guiltless of all his previous sins. He will also have a new life and as long as he is united with Christ (Romans 6:5), his new life will be the life of Christ after rising from among the dead, that is how he becomes a guiltless and a Holy part in the body of Christ. This is what the Holy Spirit does in the mystery of baptism; He gives us the opportunity to die with Christ and rise in Him, because all of us with one soul baptized to one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). That is why baptism is called a birth from water and spirit (John 3:5). Exactly like the first creation; when God’s spirit hovered over water, from which life was brought forth (Genesis 1:2). The Holy spirit hovers over baptism water and brings the baptized man with a new life and this is the meaning of the new life (Romans 6:4).
- ❖ “For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life” (Romans 5:10).
- ❖ This means we have reconciliation with God as our sins shall be forgiven through baptism where the old body is crucified with Christ and dies. But death with Christ in baptism to forgive sins is half of the truth. The other half of the truth is that we rise again with Him and He gives us His life, this is the meaning of being saved by His life. When He gives us His life, He gives us the same path He walked through, that is to follow the same righteous path. He gives us both His life and His righteousness. Christ gives us a new life. We are buried with Him by baptism, our old body is buried and we come out of baptism water sharing in Christ’s resurrection to live in this new life; which appeared first in the resurrection of Christ as the head of the new creation.

**The fact that Christ gives us His life to live with is explained by the Apostle Paul as followed:**

- ❖ “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20) + “For to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). This is the meaning of being saved by His life. But we also understand that “being saved by His life” means that Christ lives on the right hand of the God to intercede for us. He lives by the body He took from man (Romans 8:34).
- ❖ But Christ’s intercession is for the repentant believer (1 John 2:1-2). This was the call of Christ “Repent” (Matthew 4:17). Christ’s intercession for us isn’t a prayer to the Father, but it is His existence with His body in front of the Father is a complete intercession (1 Timothy 2:5) + (Hebrews 10:19-22)
- ❖ “I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). To have the life of Christ, I have to crucify my desires (Galatians 5:24).

### **Does baptism grant a complete death for the old man?**

- ❖ Absolutely not. This way, it would oppress man’s freedom. The old man dies through baptism, but I have all the freedom to revive him again and I also have the power to keep him dead. This power is given by the Holy Spirit and we call it the grace.
- ❖ The old man continues in his troubles and the body with its desires withstands the work of the spirit, and this ends only by death. Actually, grace gives us enormous powers that make the desires of the body as if they were dead. But any neglect from man in this fight, or any complacency with sin will make the desires of the body erupt inside of him; that is why The Apostle Paul says:
- ❖ “My body is sold as a slave to sin. I do not do what I want to do, but what I hate I do. It is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” (Romans 7:14-24).
- ❖ “So I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit and the spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want” (Galatians 5: 16-17).
- ❖ In the same concept, through baptism, we become children of God, but we can see in (Romans 8: 23) “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” What we got until now from the Holy Spirit is only the first-fruits. Also, what we got from sonship is the first-fruits as well, as the ideal son of God does not mistake (1 John 3: 9). But we are still in the body, so we will still mistake (1 John 1: 8).
- ❖ In the following verses, we can see that we got the Holy Spirit. “Who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1: 22) + (2 Corinthians 5: 5) and also “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our

inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession" (Ephesians 1: 13-14). Note that Paul speaks to the baptized Galatians, as he said to them in (Galatians 3: 5) "He so that supplies to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you...". The Apostle Paul speaks here to Christians whom God granted His Holy Spirit, so they are now baptized. However, he tells them that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh... You may not do the things that you would (Galatians 5: 17). The meaning of the flesh here is not the body itself, as the body is not bad; the proof is that Christ took a body like us. The meaning here is the bodily pitfalls from which man cannot be liberated even through the exercises of asceticism nor the acts of mortification, not even through death itself, as salvation from them is only by the grace of the Savior Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of "flesh" according to The Apostle Paul when he said, "But I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me" (Romans 7: 23). We note that he speaks of the present, not the past. The present pressures him, but not the memories of the past. He sees the other law not only fights, but taken a prisoner of the present law of sin, not the past one in his members (Romans 7: 23). Then he screams, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death" (Romans 7: 24).

- ❖ So the words of The Apostle Paul "For the flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit" (Galatians 5: 17) means works of the body and not the body itself. That means any acts by of the bodily passions or we may directly say that they refer to the sins mentioned in (Romans 6: 12), "So, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires" (Romans 6: 12). Desires will fight me, but I can control it and I can refuse it asking for divine help and grace, so it will not have power over me.
- ❖ The meaning of the body here is the old man, naturally born from a father and a mother. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalms 51: 5). This old man is the one who makes bodily pitfalls.

### **How do we abide in Christ and how can we have the life of Christ?**

- ❖ Through baptism, we have the life of Christ and we became members in His body but whoever is driven following his desires once again awakens this corrupted old man, so he loses his life in Christ. We know that there is no fellowship between light and darkness (2 Corinthians 6: 14-15). That's why The Apostle Paul says:
- ❖ "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2: 20).
- ❖ So, as much as we practise crucifying ourselves, we will see Christ alive inside us and His righteousness in our lives. However, the life of Christ in us, that we might receive its possibilities, and its seed in baptism is the strength of the new life that we have as children of God in this world.
- ❖ "The fruit of the spirit is love and joy.... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5: 22-24).

- ❖ It is clear that the fruit of the spirit is only clear in those who crucified their desires and considered themselves dead. This is said by Christ “He that abides in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit” (John 15: 4-5). Whoever considered himself dead from the whims and desires and sins of the world, will be in Christ, so he will have much fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. Also note the words of The Apostle Paul:
- ❖ “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6: 14).
- ❖ “Carrying in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also appear in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4: 10-11) + “If we have died with Him, we shall also live with him” (2 Timothy 2: 11).
- ❖ “So we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly, we are being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4: 16) + “We are dead in sins sometimes with Christ” (Ephesians 2: 5).
- ❖ In summary, Christ redeemed us, and through baptism, our sins are forgiven, and Christ gave us His life. But whoever crucifies his whims, will be in Christ and will have the life of Christ, so he may be justified and saved.

### **Salvation by Faith**

- ❖ We, the Orthodox Copts, baptize young children. But, what about the adults who were not baptized at young age?
- ❖ Here we say that the first condition for salvation is the sincerity of faith. This is followed by baptism. Christ says, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16: 16). Those who were baptized as children, then abandoned their faith later, will perish and will not be saved by their baptism. Peter, after his homily on day of Pentecost when 3000 souls believed, baptized them (Acts 2: 41). Paul baptized the commander of Philippi Prison with his family after he believed (Acts 16: 33). Christ confirms the importance of baptism, as without it, we cannot enter the kingdom (John 3: 5). Faith is the entrance to all the blessings of the New Testament, so The Apostle Paul says:-
- ❖ This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ... All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness to redeem all sins (Romans 3: 22-25).
- ❖ Review the fourth Chapter of Epistle to the Romans and you can see that Abraham was justified with his faith, not his work. The faith of Abraham was the belief in God, Who is able to give life to his aging and Sarah’s womb to have a son. Even if the son died, God is able to raise him (Hebrews 11: 17-19). This faith in God who is able to grant us life as He gave life to Christ and raised Him from the dead, is the entrance to justification.
- ❖ So, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5: 1).

- ❖ Does The Apostle Paul mean that salvation is through faith, and that our works are not essential for salvation?! He certainly does not mean that, but we see him stresses on the importance of struggle. What is Struggle?

### **Struggle and good deeds**

Struggle is when man forces himself to do something good he does not want to do. For example, the desire of the body is to sleep and enjoy the lusts of the world, but struggle is to stand to pray while his body is exhausted. Struggle is to fast while he wants to eat, but he forces himself to do this. There are two types of struggle, the negative and the positive struggle. The negative struggle is when man prevents himself from sinning and considers himself dead, while the positive struggle is when man forces himself to do deeds of righteousness like praying, fasting, serving, worshiping and praising...etc, so Christ says that the kingdom of the Heaven suffers violence, and men of violence take it by force. (Matthew 11: 12).

### **The Apostle Paul speaks about the negative struggle:**

- ❖ In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. So, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness (negative struggle), but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness (positive struggle). For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6: 11-14)
- ❖ “Put to death, so, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity...” (Colossians 3: 5-10).
- ❖ “So, I urge you to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Be you transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1, 2). This means that man should act as a dead one against his sins and desires.
- ❖ “As it is written: for your sake we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (Romans 8: 36).
- ❖ “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection lest... I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9: 27).
- ❖ “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5: 1).
- ❖ “Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh” (Galatians 5: 13).
- ❖ “But you, O man of God, flee from these things “ (he means the love of money)” (1 Timothy 6: 10-12)
- ❖ “Flee from the youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2: 22).
- ❖ “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Hebrews 12: 1-4).

- ❖ All of that was about the negative struggle and The Apostle Paul says that the:
  - ❖ **Positive struggle** means we should do good deeds:
- ❖ “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith...” (2 Timothy 4: 7, 8).
- ❖ “To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality. . . And God will repay each person according to what they have done” (Romans 2: 6-7).
- ❖ Review (Romans 12: 9-21). We see The Apostle Paul here tells us how our members act as good instruments doing good deeds.
- ❖ “So that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15: 6).
- ❖ “If I have the gift of prophecy . . . But have no love then, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13: 2-13).
- ❖ “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the spirit” (1 Corinthians 14: 1).
- ❖ “Be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not a vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- ❖ “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love” (1 Corinthians 16: 13, 14).
- ❖ So, since we have these promises, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit (negative struggle) perfecting holiness out of reverences for God (positive struggle) (2 Corinthians 7: 1).
- ❖ “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2 Corinthians 9: 6). That means who sows good deeds will gain blessings as much as he sows.
- ❖ “A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the spirit, from the spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6: 7-10).
- ❖ “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith and love” (Galatians 5: 6 + Galatians 6: 15).
- ❖ “Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life” (1 Timothy 6: 11, 12).
- ❖ “And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good” (Timothy 3: 8).
- ❖ “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12: 14).
- ❖ “The blood of Christ. . . Cleanse our conscience from acts that leads to death, so that you may serve the living God” (Hebrews 9: 14).
- ❖ What is intended by service is the worship, being in the presence of God and the praising of God like angels. The blood of Christ washes us from the dead works; sins and washes



the heart and conscience, relive the soul and keep it close to the presence of God to serve by prayers, love, and praising by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, set your minds on things above not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3: 1-3).

### **Conclusion:**

Whoever was baptized and crucified his desires (negative struggle) and kept the good deeds (positive struggle) will be in Christ and say with The Apostle Paul “for me life is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1: 21).

\* There is a question to be raised here... I am asked to kill the desires of my body and to do good deeds; do I have the power to do that alone? Will my struggle take me to heaven? Of course not. As Jesus said:

- ❖ “Without me you cannot do anything” (John 15: 5) and repeated by Paul as such:
- ❖ “I can do anything with Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4: 13). “Christ sent the Holy Spirit to help us and to help us in our weakness” (Romans 8: 26). We call the power of the Holy Spirit “Grace”.
- ❖ “You have been saved by the grace” (Ephesians 2: 5).
- ❖ “Not by works so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2: 9).

Our deceitful heart and incompetent works (Jeremiah 17: 9) are unable to admit us into the kingdom of God and they are also unable to save us. However, the grace gives us salvation, but it does not work with the lazy but it works with those who struggle. So, we heard about the struggle and our commitment to do good deeds. Those who struggle deserve that the grace would grant them help and power. That power gives them the opportunity to be a new creation in the form and image of Christ. “If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5: 17).

### **Example:**

A man with lustful eyes decides to repent, saying that his eyes has died with Christ and he has no right to see (that is the meaning of the words of the Christ that he should pluck out his eyes). He is seriously struggling putting his eyes in the dust. He has the freedom to choose the way of death instead of the lusts of the world. Then Grace intervenes. The Holy Spirit gives him a dead lust, and then he finds himself in a new nature without the desire to look. That nature is not of him, but it is a gift from God to help him. The grace prevents his eyes from looking to the lusts of the world. Moreover his eyes would long to see the glory of God and repeat with the Prophet David, “One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in His temple” (Psalms 27: 4). The eyes here turned from an instrument of sin to an instrument of righteousness, and this is the new creation. This is repeated with every part in our body to become a new creation and to be in Christ. With this nature, we can enter into heaven. We notice that the grace does not work on its own without man’s effort. If this was true, so why does Grace not turn all people or at least all believers into saints!

### **The Work of Grace:**

Grace is the work of the Holy Spirit to man. It is the power that helps him and changes his nature. It gives a new nature to those who struggle through which the old nature would be dead in it, in

other words, the old man is now dead and this is what The Apostle Paul called “circumcision of the heart by the spirit” (Romans 2: 29). That means the death of the sin and its love in the heart.

- ❖ “If you live according to flesh, you will die ... but if by the spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8: 12, 13). In this verse, we see our work (put to death) beside the work of grace (by the spirit you put to death). Grace supports and encourages those who struggle to kill their desires. Whoever does this becomes a son of God.
- ❖ “Because all who are led by the Holy Spirit, they are sons of God” (Romans 8: 14). The Holy Spirit calls and leads “Restore me, and I will return, because you are the lord my God” (Jeremiah 31: 18). He will reprove the faithful if he sins (John 16: 8) then he grants help and power (Romans 8: 26). Whoever responds with Him will be granted to become a new creation and with this new creation, we will be saved and enter into Heaven. That’s why we hear “you are saved by grace” (Ephesians 2: 5). The old nature cannot enter into heaven regardless of any good deeds it does (1 Corinthians 15: 50). Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Corruption (old nature) does not inherit non-corruption (the glory of the Heaven). Nevertheless, grace gives us power so that sin would not be able to control us.
- ❖ “Sin cannot control you because you are under grace not under the law” (Romans 6: 14). Grace is the saving power to everyone who struggles and works. However, everyone who feels the effect of the grace, who finds himself living a good life where sins do not control him, should not be proud of his work since the grace is the reason not his work.
- ❖ “Not of works, lest anyone can boast” (Ephesians 2: 9).
- ❖ Talking about this, our teacher James said, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (James 1: 17). If the righteousness which is in me is from God, then why boast of what I didn't do by myself. The Apostle Paul also says, “if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not” (1 Corinthians 4: 7). This is the meaning of the words of Christ, “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6: 3). This means if you do any good deed (work of righteousness or any rightist deed); do not be proud or feel self-righteous (that is considered as unrighteousness).

### **What did Christ give us?**

#### **The meaning of salvation:**

1. Through baptism, we die with Christ, and our previous lives die, that’s to say our old nature, and thus, our sins are forgiven. We will have the life of Christ and His righteousness; we became a new creation that rejects sin, and loves to make good deeds.
2. The grace gives us aid and help but only if we struggle and crucify our body with its passions and desires. The grace also gives us a saving power against sin, so that sins cannot control us anymore and we will have a victory over sins and desires.

3. By dying with Christ in baptism, we will be granted sonship through our resurrection united with Christ (the son) and abiding in Him. We will be granted full sonship when God grants us the glorified body after the resurrection (Romans 8: 23 + Ephesians 1: 14). This we can see it in (1 Corinthians 15: 42-44). Christ was the forerunner for us (Hebrews 6: 18-20).

This is our prayers in the Gregorian Liturgy “You have brought my first fruit up to heaven”.

Of course, only those who have the new nature that is in the image of Christ will enter Heaven, and the conditions for this are [1] Faith [2] Baptism [3] Struggle. Is this possible for us? Everyone should know that the power of the God that raised Christ and glorified His body when He sat on the right hand of the Father, is destined for us (humans) and for our nature to rise to the glory of God by Christ.

“I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:.. that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ...But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 1: 16 – 2: 6).

We are now awaiting with hope full sonship, and what The Apostle Paul calls the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8: 23). This is the meaning of his words because we are saved by hope, but visible hope is not hope. How can we hope for something we see, but if we hope for what we cannot see, we expect it with patience (Romans 8: 24, 25). Salvation is granted on phases, as it started with the birth of Christ, His crucifixion, His resurrection and ascension, then sending the Holy Spirit Who gave us the grace to have a new nature with which we can enter into Heaven. However, this new nature is still incomplete while we are on earth, because we live struggling in the hope of having the glorified body in Heaven and that is complete salvation.

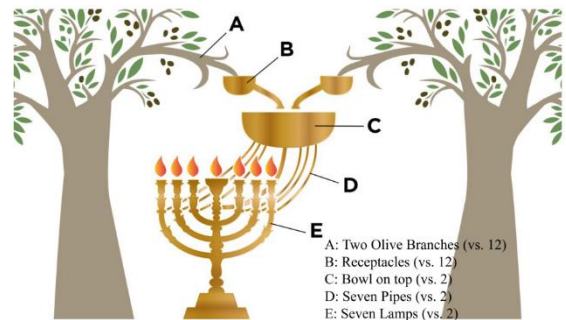
As long as we became sons by abiding in Christ, then we will inherit the glory through His son as He has chosen His Son to inherit all things (Hebrews 1: 2). (This inheritance granted to Christ with His body was for us, and if we are sons, then we inherit too (Romans 8: 17 + Hebrews 6: 20).

4. Salvation does not mean to rid of pain and trials while we still live on earth, but it means that we have the opportunity to feel joy and to comfort ourselves amid trials and pains (Corinthians 1: 24). Notice the words of The Apostle Paul, “rejoice in the Lord always and I also say rejoice” (Philippians 4: 4). The Apostle Paul said those words while he is chained in jail, but regardless of all of this, the words have a tone of joy!
  - a. “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3: 12) And here we see that pain is necessary in this world.

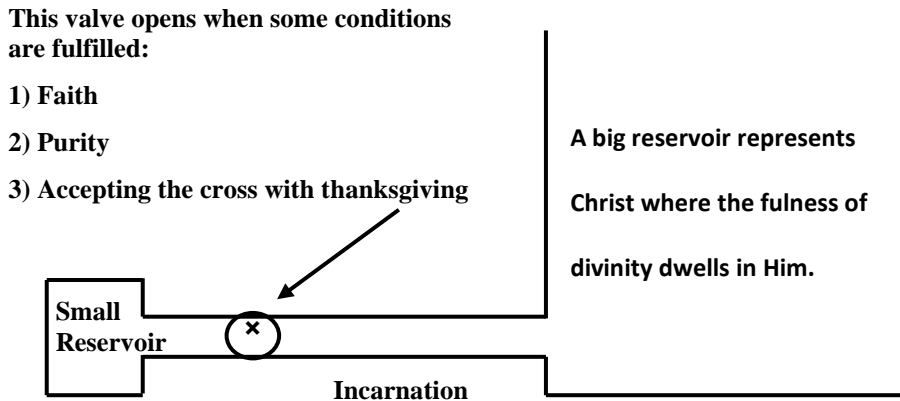
- b. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him (Philippians 1: 29). Here we see that pain has become a gift, not just necessity.
- c. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1: 6). Here we see that God does not leave us alone in pain, but He grants us joy and comfort. The same concept is found in Chapter one of Corinthians II.
- d. If indeed, we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8: 17). And whoever perseveres with patientce will have an inheritance in the glory of Christ. (Romans 8: 18).

The final relief from pains will not be here on earth, but in Heaven when God will wipe every tear from our eyes (Revelation 21: 4). In the same concept, “Give relief to you who are troubled and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from the Heaven with his powerful angels (2 Thessalonians 1: 7).

- 5. Whoever is baptized dying with Christ and rising with Him, then has fought his body and crucified it, will be in Christ and will have the life of Christ, and will be subject to the Spirit and sin will not have dominion over him, but by grace, he will have dominion over sin, such man will not be condemned. “No condemnation now for those who are in Chirst, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the spirit”. (Romans 8: 1).
- 6. The believer got great blessings after baptism as he is united in Christ, because the body of Christ was united with His divinity and that’s how Christ became the head of the Church and the source for all divine blessings of Heavenly glory, earthly glory, holiness, eternal life, wisdom, grace and the fullness of the spirit. This is what prophet Zechariah, explained in Chapter 4 i.e. the Revelation of the lampstand, and the cone on top. The lampstand in the church and the oil is the Holy Spirit Whom the Church gets from Christ and His symbol here is the bowl. The bowl is filled with oil from two olive trees, in reference to the fullness of the Holy Spirit in Christ on the day of baptism in Jordan for His church.



Moreover, all the fullness of the divinity has dwelt in the body of Christ as The Apostle Paul says: “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;. and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” (Colossians 2: 9, 10). This refers to His union with His divinity and our bodily union with Him became the source of all blessings, this is what The Apostle Paul named “all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3: 19). That is to be filled of all divine blessings according to our abilities. This can be described as follows:



The small reservoir represents the believer who abides in Christ:

[1] By faith [2] By Baptism [3] By Repentance [4] By Communion

This small tank is connected to the big tank, filled from it, as a sign of our union with incarnate Christ through baptism, and our pure life and communion. Through this connection we are filled, but what that determines our fullness are:

1. Our limited nature (the small tank).
2. Faith, purity and acceptance of the Cross with thanksgiving and without complaining.

### **Is it possible for a believer to apostatize and perish?**

After all of the gifts that God granted to the believer, Is it possible for man to apostatize and perish?

- ❖ For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized... They all ate the same spiritual food (symbol for communion) and drank the same spiritual drink (from the water that poured out of the rock; a symbol for the descent of the Holy Spirit)... Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.(1 Corinthians 10: 1-6). From this we understand that the baptized man who had the Holy Spirit, ate from the body of Lord, and drank from His blood, desiring the evils of this world he then apostatized, could perish as his ancestors perished in the wilderness and failed to enter Canaan (the symbol of Heavenly Canaan).

- ❖ Dimas, a disciple of The Apostle Paul, referred to as one of the disciples of Paul (Corinthians 4: 14). The Apostle Paul said about him “Dimas deserted me as he loved the present world” (2 Timothy 4: 9).
- ❖ So, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it (i.e., lost it) (Hebrews 4: 1).
- ❖ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction. (Philippians 3: 17-19).
- ❖ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10: 26-31).
- ❖ Review (Romans 11: 17-22) to see the possibility of the believer to be cut off from the olive, meaning the church which is the body of Christ.
- ❖ We see in (Hebrews 6: 4-8) the fearful punishment of the apostate “ It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the Heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance... and it is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned”
- ❖ Paul said about himself, “I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Corinthians 9: 27).

### **The Work of the Holy Spirit in the believer:**

The Holy Spirit Who came upon us, grants us to be a new creation . He is the One working in the Holy Sacraments. In baptism, we die with Christ and rise with Him, and we have dominion over sin (Romans 6: 14). He convicts us if we sin (John 16: 8) as he invites us to repent (Jeremiah 31: 18). And He is the one who gives us aid (Romans 8: 26), and grants us to have fruits (Galatians 5: 22, 23). He grant us with gifts (1 Corinthians 12: 11). He is the one who teaches us and reminds us of all the words of Christ (John 14:26). He makes us know Christ, and tell us about His love and attributes (John 16: 14). He opens our eyes to the glories of Heaven (1 Corinthians 2: 9-12). For now we only see the heavenly glories only as a reflection in a mirror (1 Corinthians 13: 12). And we await without having anything except faith, hope and love. These are what abide now. (1 Corinthians 13: 13). For we live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5: 7).

The Holy Spirit grants us the strength, guidance and love (2 Timothy 1: 7) and makes us abide in Christ (2 Corinthians 1: 21). That is through His work in the Sacraments of the church. By this; the Spirit Himself gives us filiation, and testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children (Romans 8: 16).

- ❖ “But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from

the dead is living in you, He Who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit Who lives in you” (Romans 8: 10, 11).

- ❖ The sign of man who is in Christ is that he is interested in spirituality “but those who live in accordance with the spirit have their minds set on what the spirit desires” (Romans 8: 5); another sign is represented in that they have fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22, 23), thereby; when the Holy Spirit gives power that kills the old man, the love of sin at the heart dies, and that's what The Apostle calls the circumcision of the heart by soul (Romans 2: 29). Because the physical circumcision is to cut a part away from the body, and leaving it to die. On the other hand; the spiritual circumcision is cutting off the love of the sin from the heart by grace which is the work of the Holy Spirit, and for those who are led by the spirit of God are the children of God (Romans 8: 14). (that's because the Holy Spirit will make him firm in Christ the son, and this son puts to death the misdeeds of the body by the spirit, therefore he lives (Romans 8: 12,13), In the same way, the spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8: 26). In this case; He gives aid to those who try and struggle. And whoever feels the work of the grace should not be proud of his work.
- ❖ And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace (Romans 11: 6), And our bodies have become temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 3: 16 + 1 Corinthians 6: 19). So; after comparing the two verses, we conclude that the Holy Spirit is God. Christ also said, “the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things” (John 14: 26), and The Apostle Paul said the same at (1 Corinthians 2: 13). “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the spirit”.
- ❖ “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3: 4-8).
- ❖ So I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5: 16). So, we understand that whoever follows the work of the Holy Spirit in which He convinces and reproaches and does not resist the work of the spirit; the Holy Spirit will grant him strength to overcome the desires of the flesh.
- ❖ What what we get from the Spirit now is an earnest for what we will be granted in heaven (2 Corinthians 1: 22 + 2 Corinthians 5: 5). And what we obtain now we get through faith (Galatians 2: 20), hope (Romans 8: 24, 25) and love (Galatians 5: 6).

### **What does an earnest mean?**

Now, we have obtained adoption on earth; “For those who are led by the spirit of God are the children of God” (Romans 8: 14). However, in Heaven we will obtain the glorious bodies which do not sin (1 Corinthians 15 + Philippians 3: 21). That's what The Apostle Paul calls “the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8: 23). However now our bodies are not yet glorified and continues to sin. As for him who does not sin is a perfect son for God.



**The Holy Spirit makes us able to keep the Commandment**

Jesus Christ said: “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me... The one who loves me will keep my commandments... (John 14: 21, 22).

In addition, The Apostle Paul says, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts” (1 Corinthians 7: 19).

Hence, we see the interest of Lord Jesus Christ and His The Apostle Paul to keep the commandments. And we understand from Jesus Christ that keeping the commandments is confined to those who love Christ, and that's the work of the Holy Spirit “because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Romans 5: 5), the spirit gives us to love, and the lover follows the commandments of the one he loves. Love transforms our hearts of stone into tablets of fleshy ones (2 Corinthians 3: 3) on which the spirit wrote in ink the commandments by love, this was predicted by prophet Ezekiel in (Ezekiel 11: 19, 20). That we will have hearts of flesh instead of hearts of stone in order to walk in God’s commandments. And whose heart has God's commandments written on it does not need tablets of stone like Moses' tablets. As God has written the commandments on tablets of stone to suit the hearts of people of Israel because they lost God's love.

That's what Jeremiah has prophesied, saying about the new covenant “I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31: 31-34 + Hebrews 8: 10-12), Therefore Jeremiah prophesied about the new covenant, when the Holy Spirit will be poured in our hearts, and gives us the love of God through which we will obey His commandments.

For each of the above, the most important thing we ask God for is to fill us with His Holy Spirit, as the Apostle says “be filled with the spirit” (Ephesians 5: 18-20).

**Being Filled with the Spirit:**

Being full with the Spirit is the grace of graces, and the grace is God's free gift to us. However; as the fathers said the grace is not given except to those who deserve it, and struggle to get it, so; what is the required struggle to get the grace of fullness of the Holy Spirit?

Christ says, give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him  
(Luke 11: 13).

**a free grace**

**(positive struggle)**

This grace which is to be filled from the Holy Spirit requires Striving which is prayer, and prayer, here, means to pray with persistence.

The Apostle Paul says be filled with the spirit  
(Ephesians 5:18-20)

**Grace**

speaking to one another  
with psalms, and hymns,  
always giving thanks  
subject one to another in the fear of God

**Struggle**

The Apostle Paul says about the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5: 22, 23), that is given to “Those who have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (negative struggle) (Galatians 5: 24). In addition; he adds; do not quench the spirit, which is the opposite of be filled with the spirit, and he also says do not grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4: 17-32 + 1 Thessalonians 5: 17). From these verses, we understand the what quenches the Spirit; immoral speaking and walking in sins. Thus; we understand from the above that if we want to be filled with the Spirit, we should do the following:

1. Pray and ask God with persistence.
2. Refrain from immoral speech, recital of psalms, and hymns.
3. Giving thanks at all times, without complaining.
4. Repentance from sins, and living in fear of God.
5. Crucifying passions and desires, that is to live as dead to sins.

Following are more details and studies about fullness of spirit.

### **The path of being filled with the Spirit**

From the above, we have seen the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Thus, The Apostle Paul advises the Ephesians, and advises us also, saying “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5: 18). He also advises his disciple Timothy, saying “I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” (2 Timothy 1: 6). Stirring up means fullness, thereby; the more we are filled, the more fruits of the Spirit increases inside us. So, how do we get filled? Or how does God fill us with the Holy Spirit?

1. The Holy Spirit is given to those who ask (Luke 11: 13 + Luke 11: 9 + Luke 18: 1 + John 14: 14, 16: 24). In that way; The Apostle Paul urged the Thessalonians, saying “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5: 17 + Ephesians 6: 18 + 1 Corinthians 16: 13 + Philippians 4: 6 + Corinthians 4: 2), and the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples while they were gathering to pray (Acts 2: 4), that's why there are four daily prayers at church (once at the prayer of the third hour, and three times at midnight) in order to ask for the Holy Spirit, saying “O Heavenly King the Comforter...”. We hear from (Romans 8: 26) that “the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered”, this means that the Spirit gives us feelings and ideas, which perhaps we cannot express, but we only groan. But this means that the Spirit teaches us to pray with enjoyment, and to pray a real prayer by the Spirit [that is the meaning of The Apostle Paul's words “God, whom I serve with my spirit” (Romans 1: 9)] thus; spirit helps our weaknesses, so that we pray to God, worship and praise. Moreover; we follow all works of Christ that He asked for with the power of the Holy Spirit, for that we should force ourselves to pray (struggle) even if we don't feel pleasure, and this gives us fullness of the Spirit (grace). When we are filled, we pray with pleasure. Moreover, when we get filled, we cease from prayer to hear the Spirit and understand His message.
2. Constant praise and psalmody (1 Corinthians 14: 26 + Ephesians 5: 19 + Corinthians 3: 16+ Hebrews 13: 15). Moreover; we note that the psalms are inspired by the Holy Spirit (2

Timothy 3: 16 + 2 Peter 1: 21). Also, David the prophet says, “my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer”. i.e. that the Holy Spirit is the skillful writer, and He puts the Psalms on the tongue of David to speak of them (Psalms 45: 1).

3. “Giving thanks always for all things unto God” (Ephesians 5: 20, 4 + Colossians 3: 15, 17 + 1 Thessalonians 5: 18).
4. “Resist not the Holy Spirit” (Act 7: 51+ Romans 8: 14), “quench not the spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5: 19), or “grieve not the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 4: 30). Moreover, whoever follows the worldly desires according to the old man, he grieves the Holy Spirit. “He will reprove the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness” (John 16: 8). For whoever listens and refrains from doing sin, and follows the road of righteousness, he will not grieve the Holy Spirit, neither quench Him. “We therefore should not walk according to the old man”, resembling the people of this world (Ephesians 4: 17-32 + Ephesians 5: 3-18). The Apostle Paul gives some commandments, which whoever follows them will grieve not the spirit of God (Ephesians 6: 1-3+ Romans 13: 8-10+ Colossians 3: 18-25+ 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-8). Review chapters (12-14) of Epistle to the Romans. The Apostle is asking us to “reject every kind of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5: 22); this abstaining is the negative struggle. In this way, he asks his disciples to “Flee the evil desires of youth” (2 Timothy 2: 22). As we saw in (Galatians 5: 22-24), the fruit of the Holy Spirit appear on those who have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. Consequently, St. Basil the Great said: “the Holy Spirit is in those who deserve Him, but He does not show His power except to those who purified themselves from desires”.
5. We should walk in the path of positive struggle, as The Apostle asks us to follow the way of love for all (Ephesians 4: 1-4+ 5: 1-2+ 4: 32+ 1 Corinthians 13:13+ 1 Corinthians 13+ Colossians 3: 12-14). He also asks us to “hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5: 21+ Philippians 4: 8, 9). He also asked to his disciple Timothy, “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4: 13). Thereupon; with reading and exhortation we are filled, as “he that waters shall be watered also himself” (Proverbs 11: 25). In addition to that, he asks us to “seek those things which are above” (Colossians 3: 1-4), as seeking things on the earth quenches the Spirit, and to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2: 12), as careless people quench the Spirit.
6. In verses (Colossians 3: 5-10) The Apostle asks to “Mortify so your members who are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness... seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him”. Here, we see an image to what happened in the Redemption, that after the death of Christ, He rose, then ascended, then sent the Holy Spirit. The same happens with us; as whoever chooses the way of death for his lusts, the Holy Spirit grants him to rise with Christ and live in the heavenlies while he is on earth, then he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

7. We note that when the Holy Spirit has descended upon the disciples when they were all with one accord. The love that gathers us in one place, especially if we gather to pray in this Spirit, we are filled with the Holy Spirit by this love (Acts 2: 1-4+ Philippians 2: 2).
8. Emptying ourselves and being humble help us to be filled with the Spirit (Philippians 2: 3-9). Let us observe the Apostle Paul talking about himself, saying: “to save sinners, of whom I am chief”(1 Timothy 1: 15), and he calls himself abnormally born (1 Corinthians 15: 7, 8). Here, we recognize The Apostle Paul's feelings of not deserving the grace, which he has. That is what the Prophet Isaiah indicated that God dwells with the humble (Isaiah 57: 15).
9. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit descends upon the baptized after being anointed with chrism, but if he was old, he must declare his faith and repentance first, then he'll be baptized. That is what Peter said unto them on Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized”, because the work of the Holy Spirit which we have received is renewed through repentance (Acts 2: 38). The mystery of Chrismation is the alternative of laying of the hand (Acts 19: 6). In this way, The Apostle Paul asks: “be you transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12: 2).
10. Devoting the heart to Christ, to submit everything in our life to Him (emotions, interests...), not to care for materials, but to care about what is above that is not seen (2 Corinthians 5: 18), give Him ourselves and accept the cross without complaining. Whoever wants to glorify Christ in his life, the Spirit will fill them to glorify Christ, as this is the work of the Holy Spirit “He shall glorify me” (John 16: 14). On the other hand, whoever wants to glorify himself, he will not be filled. Therefore, in order to be filled, we need to glorify Christ on our lives.
11. Jesus says: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink, and He that believeth in Me, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water; But this He spoke of the Spirit” (John 7: 37-39). Here, the foundation is the feeling of need, this is the opposite of the state of the Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3: 17). Prayer is the expression of thirst for God, by this thirst with prayer in faith; there is a river of living water flowing within us. Note the relation of faith with fullness of the Holy Spirit. For those who begin with a simple faith, and pray, will be filled with the Holy Spirit. In addition, great faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-23).

### **Signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit:**

1. Perception of Christ's presence among us, as the Spirit witnesses to Him “in order to give you according to the riches of His glory, you should be sustained by His Spirit in the inner man to come upon faith in your hearts”+ John 14: 18+ John 16: 16 “ and again a little while, and you shall see me”. So, He opens our internal eyes to see Christ present, in order to know Him to love Him.
2. Fullness with wisdom; since wisdom stems from abiding in Christ, the hypostasis of wisdom.

3. Fullness with fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-23) And the signs of joy is the constant praise.
4. Having dominion over sin (Romans 6: 14).
5. Fullness with power. Compare between Peter's stance and his denial in fear of a maid, and his stance after the descent of the Holy Spirit and his sermon that caused 3000 souls to believe.

### **A Summary About the Holy Spirit:**

#### ***“From the book of Cross and Baptism by Dr. Noshi Abdul Shaid”***

It was not possible for the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to come to the Church before Christ's plan was fulfilled, which means; His completion for salvation by His ascension to the Heavens i.e. His entrance with His glorified body that He took from our nature to the Heaven (Acts 2: 32, 33). The human nature has become glorified with the glory of the divinity by the sitting of Christ at the right hand of the Father, that means when His body that he took from the human nature took the glory of the divinity.

This is why Christ says “It is good for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you” (John 16: 7, 8, 13, 14). Therefore it was necessary for Christ to first sit at the right hand of the Father, by His intercession the Spirit is poured forth.

The Holy Spirit is the one who declares the person of the Lord Jesus, He makes us see Christ manifest in our hearts; “I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you” (John 14: 18), the Spirit creates the presence of Christ within us, and when our internal eyes are opened, we see the living and glorified Christ dwelling in us “and again a little while, and you shall see Me” (John 16: 16). Then, Christ becomes a real and present person for us. For the spirit by filling us brings in our depths the image of the glorified living Christ. (2 Corinthians 3: 18), meaning that we see the glory of Christ, and observe Him in our hearts, so; we change to the image of Christ that the Spirit reveals to our hearts (Galatians 4: 19). “And that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12: 3). And when we know Christ and realize His love to us, we'll love Him and surrender to Him our life.

The Apostle Paul says; that Christ is the High Priest of good things to come (Hebrews 9: 11). The good things are the Holy Spirit (compare Matthew 7: 7, 11 with Luke 11: 13). We taste the eternal life through the Holy Spirit, and what we get now is the earnest. In addition; Jesus exhorts us to ask for the Holy Spirit in prayer “gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11: 13).

The Holy Spirit reveals the Father to us, so we cry, “Abba, Father” (Galatians 4: 9). So; He reveals to us the mystery of the Trinity, the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the one who prepares the church as a bride to her groom Christ to unite with Him in His eternal wedding in an indescribable glory.

The Spirit gives strength to whoever wants to die to sin, in order to help him to truly die to it (Romans 8: 13), that is what the Apostle called the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit. Therefore, we should start forcing ourselves, and whoever forces himself to abstain from sin, God would feel sympathy for him, save him from his enemies (the sin that is dwelling inside us and

Satan), and fill him with the Holy Spirit, the helper. Then; he can truly carry out all commandments of God without any compulsion, difficulty or tiredness. That's what was meant by The Apostle when he said "So; if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5: 17).

The aim of our joining to Christ's body by baptism is to acquire the fullness of the Spirit existing in the church, and dwelling inside it since Pentecost. Fullness is the extension and the development to the gift which was received on the day of baptism in the mystery of Chrismation. The Apostle's request is to be filled with the Spirit meaning to open our hearts and our being to the Holy Spirit to fill us. The Spirit is poured out consistently with its fullness from Christ, and awaits the willing heart and the obedient soul which submits Christ in order to pour out His fullness in it. The fullness does not happen once, but many times and throughout lifetime (Acts 2: 4+ Acts 4: 31), and happens again according to the need, especially; in the stances that need witnessing and preaching in Christ's name (Mathew 10: 17-20).

The Holy Spirit gives us all of this through prayers and Divine mysteries, "And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4: 7), and we get filled with love for God and for all even to our enemies, and we get filled with joy that restores us back to the first state in Paradise (the Garden of Eden = Garden of joy).

### **Orthodoxy is the correct middle position between two deviations in thinking**

Some sects advocate that salvation is not based on one's religion, belief or faith, but it depends only on his works. On the other hand, other sects profess that salvation depends only on grace, and one's works have no importance, but whoever believes, gets salvation by grace.

### **And in response to the first sect:**

We summarize the response in one verse said by the Apostle Paul: "for if righteousness could be gained through the law (Judiasm), Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2: 21), so; if salvation is not based on believing in Christ, so why did He incarnate and get crucified?!, and the Lord Himself, have established this condition to live; "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet he shall live" (John 11: 25). In addition, The Apostle Paul says: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11: 6).

### **And in response to the second sect:**

It's under the title of "Struggle and good deeds"

The correct Orthodox view as we perceive it from the Bible is to necessitate struggle with grace, for example:

1. God asks Noah to build an ark to protect him from water that will be falling heavily, which the ark will float upon. Did Noah at that time have any technical experience (technology) to build the ark that will serve as a submarine? Defiantly, not. Nevertheless, Noah had to spare no effort in building the ark. He continued to do so (struggle or work) for decades, so; this is Noah's struggle. Then comes the role of grace; and we hear that in the verse

(Genesis 7: 16) “the Lord shut him in”. God with His grace shut Noah in, completed his weaknesses and lack of experience, and saved him from drowning. However, Noah had to struggle and build the ark.

2. In the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, the Lord had asked His disciples to bring what they find, this is Struggle. As for Christ, by His grace He fed the thousands, and 12 baskets of food are left. So, did Christ ask His disciples to bring what they find? Was he not able to perform the miracle without the five loaves and the two fishes? Nevertheless, the Lord wanted to show that man should do what he can do, and that is we call Struggle.
3. When Christ raised Lazarus, why did He ask people to lift the stone? This is struggle; this is the most that can be done by humans. On the other hand, Christ with His grace raised up the dead, and gave him life.
4. In the miracle of turning water into wine; Christ asked that they would fill the pots, which was a tedious process, as they carried the water from the nearest spring to fill them, and returned to pour them in the pots, and so on till pots were filled. If Christ had turned water into wine, He would have been able to to turn air into wine without the need of servants' effort (Struggle), in such a way; He would bring comfort to them. Yet the question remains; where is the struggle for grace to come?

If we understand that this water was for cleansing, then the meaning would be that we should do what we can, and as much as we are able to in order to purify ourselves (positive and negative struggle). Christ gives us with His grace to become a new creation filled with the Holy Spirit. And whoever is filled with the Spirit, is also filled with joy which is what wine refers to. Therefore, The Apostle Paul says: “Mortify so your members which are upon the earth” (Colossians 3: 5). Whoever follows that, God will grant him to become a new creation by grace.

5. In the Miracle of catching a fish that Peter found a coin inside, we see a vivid example of struggle and grace. If Christ said to him, "Hey Peter, you are a fisherman, go and catch fish and sell it to pay tax with the price" then this would mean that salvation is by works without the intervention of Christ. If Christ gave a coin to Peter from the air without any effort from Peter, then salvation would be by grace. But we find that Christ uses the talent of Peter, as a fisherman, and with His grace Peter catches a fish containing the needed money to pay tribute.
6. **An example from the teachings of Christ about grace and struggle:**

The Lord Christ says love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

Love is a gift from God, a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) which is poured in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5: 5). So it is a grace from God, it is a free gift. So then how can the Lord command us to love our enemies in spite of:

1. It is very difficult demand on humans.
2. Love is a gift from Him. So why didn't He give it to us without commanding us?!

The reason is that in order to get the grace, that is the love of enemies, we must struggle, for there is no a grace without struggle. And what is the needed struggle here?

- 1) **Bless those who curse you** =That is to talk about them with good and blessed words which may be the opposite of what is in our hearts, and that doesn't come except by forcing ourselves, " The kingdom of heaven suffers violence" (Matthew 11:12). Suffering violence is what we call struggle.
- 2) **Do goods to them** = even if it is forced on us, we offer them services that they need.
- 3) **Pray for them**= even if we force ourselves.

In this verse we see that getting the love of enemies "the grace" is by forcing ourselves and struggling against our sinful nature that hates others, especially if they were enemies. If we struggle and force ourselves, grace will be poured in us, and we will find ourselves easily able to love our enemies and this is what the Apostle calls "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

#### **7. An example from the teachings of the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 5: 18-21).**

"But be filled with the Spirit (Grace); speaking to yourselves in Psalms (Struggle) thankful (Struggle) in the fear of God (Struggle)"

Being filled with the Spirit is a gift from God. It is a free gift, so it is a grace. This is not possible for human beings. But to be filled, and for God to pour into us the grace we must observe what it takes to struggle for to get grace.

1. That we do not say any bad word, our meetings must not be for mockery, but be meetings of prayer and praise.
2. To be thankful at all times, even amid pain. Without grumbling.
3. To behave with fear of God and refrain from all evil and all sin.

If salvation was only by grace without the role of man, then why did God not make all people saints by His grace? or at least why He did not make all the faithful saints?!If we assumed that salvation is only by grace, this would be a justification for sinners at the day of judgment saying "the grace did not work in us as it worked in the saints" and with this they would attribute to God favoritism and lack of justice. If it was only the work of grace, without the struggle of the believer, would everyone be saved?, and we know that God wants everyone to be saved (all people) (1 Timothy 2:4)? As we said earlier, the work of grace does not disrupt the freedom of man. Man has freedom and has full freedom and the will to accept or refuse God, and disrupt the good will of God towards him. This is what the Lord said "O Jerusalem. . . how many times I wanted to gather your children. . . and you would not" (Here we see that Jerusalem had personal freedom to reject God but it disrupted the good will of God towards them).

The result is. . . "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23: 37,38).

And we understand from the words of the Apostle Paul, "We are workers with him" (2 Corinthians 6:1) that our salvation depends on our will and our struggle, and whoever wants, strives and forces himself, the grace will give him a new nature that will save him. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence (Matthew 11:12).



This is what the Apostle meant by saying " I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave (Negative struggle) so that after I have preached to others (positive struggle) I myself will not be disqualified for the prize " (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Some imagine that the words of the Apostle "by grace you are saved" (Ephesians 2:5) "not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2: 9) that this is proof that there is no need for the works. Here we should understand that there are two kinds of grace:-

1. Grace that works have nothing to do with, such as the Incarnation of Christ and His redemption and sending of the Holy Spirit upon the church. For Christ died for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5: 8). The fact that we went out to the world and found ourselves Christians. We did not do anything to get all of this.
2. Grace which is the power that changes us from the old nature to the new nature and a new creation in the image of Christ, living in righteousness. This grace is not given except to those who deserve it, that is for those who struggle. But our struggle in keeping ourselves pure does not amount to more than five loaves and two fish, but the new creation by grace equals the satisfying of the crowd.

Whoever struggles and forces himself with negative struggle (who kill and crucify his members and desires as one who is crucified with Christ) and with positive struggle (prayer / fasting / service / praise. . . ) God gives him a new nature by His grace. And Christ will live in him (Galatians 2:20) and he will be transformed into the image of Christ (Galatians 4:19). We are saved by this nature not by our works. We therefore do not take pride in our works. Our left hand does not know what our right hand is doing, but we struggle crying out to God to fill us with the Holy Spirit "with His grace", and the Holy Spirit is the one Who gives us to be a new creation by which we are saved.

### **Conscience, Law and Grace:**

1. The fall of Adam rotted the human nature. Thus became all the children of Adam. But God had printed his commandments on the human heart, and this is what is called conscience or natural law. This was the keeper of the person from rushing into the path of evil, and the person had ability to know God through nature (Romans 1:20), using his mind. But the corruption hardened man's heart and lost the nature of love that makes the commandments printed in the heart. With this conscience was corrupted.

2. God gave Moses the law in writing, instead of the conscience which was corrupted. This law was a grace from God as a helper to man (Ezekiel 20: 11,12). But the law was not able to change the nature of man, but it was to curb his cravings. People were afraid of committing evil out of fear of the punishments of the law. This is why the Apostle said about the law, it is our Guardian (Galatians 3:24) and we pray in the Gregorian Liturgy "You give me the law as a helper. "

3. Christ incarnate, and died so that we would die with Him in baptism, and rose so that we would rise with Him in baptism. We die from the old nature, and rise with a new nature united with Christ, and in the confirmation the Holy Spirit dwells in us and make us steadfast in Christ and gives us a

grace working in us to change our nature to a new nature with which we can easily do what the believers couldn't do under the law, and were able to struggle against sin easily (Hebrews 12:1). But we need to struggle in order for grace to work in us.

- a. Negative struggle (mortifying our desires and crucifying them and living as dead towards sin)
- b. Positive struggle (prayer / fasting. . .)

The Spirit gives aid to those who do this and struggle "but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" (Romans 8: 13-16 + Romans 8:26+ Romans 2:29). The Spirit gives us a new nature in the form of the image of Christ (Galatians 4:19) and with this nature we are saved (Galatians 6:15) and the words of the apostle "by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2: 8) means that we saved by this new nature that was given to us by the grace, not by our works (Ephesians 2: 9). As an example of this: -

A believer suffers from lustful eyes (by his old sinful nature) and hears the voice of the Gospel saying "put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature" (Colossians 3: 5) so he abstains and struggles till he stops looking, putting his eyes on the dust, crying out to God to help him, counting himself a living sacrifice, and that it is not appropriate to those who count themselves a living sacrifice to enjoy wrong looks. Up to this point his work will not make him to enter into heaven, but makes him worthy for grace to be poured on him to change his nature, and that he won't desire to any lustful looks, he would cast out sin from him easily. He now has a new nature, has become a new creation with which he can enter into heaven. This is the meaning of "by grace ye are saved" (Ephesians 2: 8). It is not by his initial attempts therefore he must not boast of his struggle and his works. (Ephesians 2: 9).

### **A Contemplation on Psalm 118: 19-20:**

Open to me the gates of righteousness (this is the desire of the psalmist's heart for justification by Christ, that is with grace)

This is the door to the Lord (the righteousness of Christ, and Christ is the door. This justification is a gift from God. . . but for whom?)

The righteous walk through it (No one will enter from the door to be justified except him who forces himself and enters through the narrow door by considering himself dead against the wrong lusts of world, struggling in his prayers)

Whoever forces himself is considered righteous. And the righteous is counted worthy to enter from the door, and be justified by grace. And justification by grace is the new creation, by which believers enter into heaven. That's what David always desired as he was cried out "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

### **Sacraments and Salvation:**

As we have seen in (Romans 6: 3-5) that the sacrament of baptism means death from the old man and the resurrection of a new man, living in a new life, "Behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore baptism is death and life, it is from water and the Spirit.

But man through his life is susceptible to fall, and St. John admits this and says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1: 8). So Jesus founded another mystery which is the mystery of repentance and confession. So St. John continues saying, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 9). And since confession cleanses from all unrighteousness, the fathers called repentance and confession, a second baptism. But the confession must be preceded by repentance. The Holy Spirit Who works in the sacraments, convicts and brings the person to repentance "Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God" (Jeremiah 31:18) He convicts us of sin (John 16:8). He helps the path of repentance (Romans 8:26). He is the one who gives absolution in the sacrament of confession when the priest prays the absolution (John 20: 22,23). He drives the feelings of repentance, rebuking, convicting the sinner and persuading him to leave his sin (Jeremiah 20:7). So he goes to the priest confessing his sin, and there, the Spirit gives forgiveness. We note that by sin we lose our establishment in Christ so that we die, and by confession sin is forgiven, so that we live. Therefore we heard the words of the Lord in the parable of the Prodigal Son, "this son of mine was dead and is alive again" (Luke 15:24). But as we have said that the Apostle Paul asks us to crucify ourselves and to kill our sinful desires and our members, and also to offer our bodies a living sacrifice by a decision of repentance "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2+ Galatians 2:20+ Galatians 5:24+ Colossians 3:5+ Romans 6:11). Repentance is a decision that I die to sin, a decision supported by the Holy Spirit

by grace. By grace we live as dead to sin and alive in Christ. So the mystery of repentance and confession is also a death and a life. It is a mystery through which the Holy Spirit works.

After this comes the sacrament of the Eucharist. We note that St. Cyril has a wonderful Fraction (No. 19 in the service book) In which he says, "At the offering of the sacrifice upon the altar, sin shall cease from our members through Your grace.". The Orthodox Church administers the body separate from the blood. For when we receive the broken body we share with the crucified Christ in His death. And when I accept to be crucified with Christ, to crucify my desires and my lusts, the Holy Spirit gives me the strength and grace by which I become dead to sin. This is what is meant to Saint Cyril's saying "sin shall cease from our members.". Then, after receiving the body we receive the blood, and blood in the Bible refers to life. The one who agrees to be crucified with Christ will have the life of Christ "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). So in the Eucharist, we share with Christ His cross (sin will cease from our members) and share with Him in His life "so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me" (John 6:57), also review (John 6:32-58). By this we understand that the sacrament of the Eucharist is also a sacrament of death and life, the death of the old man, as well as life and unity in Christ. The sacrament of Chrismation gives the baptized person the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, Who does all these works. And from (Galatians 5:22-24), the fruit of the Spirit does not appear, that is no one will be filled with the Spirit, except whomever agrees to crucify his body with its whims and desires. Therefore this sacrament is also a death of the desires of sin to live filled with the Spirit. The sacrament of priesthood is a server of all the sacraments. So God has founded the sacraments to help the believer and give him death of his old man and resurrection of a new man and unity in Christ. Whoever abides in Christ, his body will be dead to his desires; which means his old man is dead, but at the same time he will have the life of Christ. For the work of the Holy Spirit is to give the death to the old man and a new life in Christ "and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10). In short, the purpose of the whole sacraments is to make us abide in the Body of Christ, by dying unto the world and living in Christ. The Sacraments are an invisible grace obtained by visible means. For Baptism is the forgiveness of sins, the death of the previous life and the resurrection of a new adopted man. As for the visible means are immersion and submersion in water with prayers. The definition of baptism is a death and resurrection with Christ, we can find it in (Romans 6:3-10). So, do all baptized persons truly become dead from the world? We say no... because struggle is required to consider ourselves dead. Therefore the Apostle continues saying "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:11) so, there is no grace without struggle.

The sacrament of Chrismation is the sacrament of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the christened. Do everyone who get chrismated or have had the laying of the hands upon him become full of the Holy Spirit? Absolutely not. Otherwise Paul the Apostle would not have said to his disciple "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6).

Similarly in repentance and confession. Whoever confesses, his sins will be forgiven (1 John 1:9). But this is for him who struggles to reckon himself to be dead unto sin (Colossians 3:5 + Romans 8:13 + Romans 6:11).

Also in Eucharist too. Eucharist is the abiding in Christ, but this abiding is for him who reckons himself to be dead unto sin (Colossians 3:5 + Romans 8:3 + Romans 6:11).

Also in the sacrament of marriage, the Holy Spirit combines the couple in spiritual love, and makes them compatible and in love. But this for him who struggles, prays, fasts and takes communion repenting from his sins. As for him who doesn't have a relationship with God and lives only seeking the pleasures of the world and the desires of his body, the Holy Spirit will not do this work in him, so he will hate his wife and the differences will increase between them.

So we understand that through the sacraments we get grace that gives a life that abides in the Body of Christ, therefore it is the basis of salvation. But this grace increases by our struggles, and decreases by our neglect. This is what the Apostle meant by saying "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and "and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30). This means that whoever succumbs to the desires of the world quenches and grieves the spirit, and loses the work of the grace in him. So the grace that we take from sacraments is like a balance that can be increased if we struggle and can be decreased if we don't.

### **The concept of pain and trials:**

The Apostle Paul, who preached in almost all of Europe, the chosen vessel who wrote half of the books of the New Testament, we can see that he has suffered very severe sufferings:-

1. He was suffering from weakness of his eyes (Galatians 4:15 + Galatians 6:11), and his body was producing pus continuously (Acts 19:12) which made his smell repugnant (Galatians 4:13-14). Perhaps this is what Paul meant by the thorn in his body with which the messenger of Satan hit him (2 Corinthians 12:7).
2. The Jews resisted him everywhere, as well as the Gentiles too (review the book of Acts).
3. Even some of the believers resisted him too (Philippians 1:15-16).
4. They raised rumors against him that he was not an apostle, not at the level of the disciples of Christ, so he had to defend himself to confirm his teachings and the faith with which he preached (Galatians 1:1, 11).
5. They accused him that he utilized materialistic gifts, therefore he insisted that the gifts should be given to the poor of Jerusalem through people that they knew (2 Corinthians 8:16-24).
6. He summed up some of the pains that he suffered from in (2 Corinthians 11:23- 28).
7. He even imposed a repression upon his body (1 Corinthians 9:27)

### **Why, O Lord, all these pains for this faithful Apostle?**

- 1) Paul was extremely loved (Acts 20: 37-38).
- 2) Some people considered him a God and offered him sacrifices (Acts 14: 8-15 + 28:6).
- 3) He was taken up to heaven (2 Corinthians 12:1-6).
- 4) He performed marvelous miracles, he even raised a dead (Acts 20:7-11).

Therefore God feared that he would be proud so that Paul this great apostle would perish, so God therefore allowed these trials to take place (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul understood this and said "and that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). He even understood that pains are gifts from God (Philippians 1:29). Therefore he says that all things work together for good (Romans 8:28). He also considered all present and future things to be in favor of salvation. So, whatever pain that God allows to occur is designed specifically for the salvation of the souls of his beloved sons. This is the meaning of "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come — all are yours" (which means for your welfare and the salvation of your souls) (1 Corinthians 3:22). Review the story of Job, as God allowed pains to befall Job to purify him his sins that Job didn't know of. This is what the Apostle Paul did with Corinthians' sinner as he delivered him to Satan to destroy the body (by diseases for instance) but in order for the spirit to be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:5). Thus, we find Paul delivering the sinner to the messenger of Satan to purify him from his sins, and God delivers Paul the Apostle to the messenger of Satan too, but to protect him from falling into pride which he is susceptible to.

Thus we see that trials have two benefits:-

- 1- Purification from an existing sin.
- 2- Protection from a sin to which a person is susceptible to.

So, the meaning is that God allows trials to occur for man's salvation. Paul sees that pain is sharing a cross with Christ, preparing for sharing the glory "if so it be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17), he also says "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). So, trials according to St. Paul are for the preparation to the eternal glory.

This is what saint Gregory meant, the author of the Gregorian liturgy, when he said "You have turned for me the punishment into salvation". Pain and disease were the consequences and punishments of sin. However after Christ, it became a salvation, that is a reason of salvation. Even death which was a penalty for sin became Golden arch through which we can pass from this dark world the light, the glory and joy of eternity.

### **Contemplation on Revelation 7:14:**

Those who are clothed with white Clothes "those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their clothes and whitened them in the blood of the Lamb". The great tribulation is this

world which we live in, with its tribulations, and pains, but why does God allow these tribulations to be in the world? We have seen from the above that it is an inevitable consequence from the entrance of sin into the world. But God allowed it to his beloved children to purify them. If a normal person finds a piece of rusting iron, he will throw it as he finds it useless and don't fit for anything. But if it is found by an experienced and skilled person, he will bring a file and polish it to be suitable for many things. Pains and trials are this file that purifies humans. However, is it true that pains give us the purity and white clothes with which we enter to heaven as we see in this verse, Is pain capable to purify someone?! Absolutely not. But as we see in this verse that purification is by the blood of Christ, and the white clothes are the sign of this purification, our clothes which mean our lives become white (sign of righteousness) by the Blood of Christ.

### **So what are the benefits of trials?**

1. As it is written, friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). We have become deviant after the fall, since we crave the world with its desires, its lusts, and its glory. God gave us the world to use but it became a goal for us. Heaven and the glory of God was supposed to be our goal, but because of our sin, we craved the desires and the pleasures of the world. Therefore whoever craved the world became opposing God. So out of His love, God allows these trials in order for us to abstain from this world and seek comfort and the glory of heaven.

2. In a case like the case of Paul the Apostle, God feared that Paul would see that he did great works and be proud because of what he saw and what he sees of the glories of heaven, love of his people, and his miracles. But if he sees his pains, he will realize his weakness, and the idea would be established in him that he doesn't do these things himself, but whatever work he does is nothing by God's work. It is the work of grace that accompanies him, but as for him he is weak, so he should not be proud (1 Corinthians 15:10 + 1 Timothy 1:15).

3. The blood of Christ is what purifies and whitens, but whom does it purify? Does it purify men? Absolutely not, it purifies him who nestles in it, who returns with a true repentance like the prodigal son, whose father dressed him the first suit (white clothes). The benefit of famine that occurred to him and benefit of our sufferings is to leave the pleasures of the world and return to the bosom of God to be purified with the blood of Christ.

4. Therefore, Paul the Apostle said "For this cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish (he means by trials and pains), yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). From here we understand that pains are and aid from God to help us to renew the inner self. Therefore, Paul the Apostle said that it became a gift from God "For unto you it is given on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).